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THE COURTIER:

OR,

THE DAYS OF CHARLES II.

THE

COURTIER;

OR,

THE DAYS OF CHARLES II.

BY MRS. GORE,

AUTHOR OF "MAN OF BUSINESS," ETC.

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THE COURTIER;

OR,

THE DAYS OF CHARLES II.

CHAPTER I.

DEEP as they are fruitless are the furrows impressed of late years upon the fair field of society by the iron-share of party-spirit. The Conservatives and Radicals of to-day scarcely yield in acrimoniousness to the Whigs and Tories of yesterday; and, even in this age of refinement, the world is apt to pull caps and draw triggers—to call names and indulge in retorts uncourteous—in a spirit becoming the barbarian feuds of the White and Red Roses. The Catholic Question and Reform Bill begat "haters," such as even Dr. Johnson might have pronounced "good;" while banners of orange and green still emulate, in the sister kingdom, the exciting influence of the *Bianchi e Neri* of the factions of the Middle Ages.

Yet how pale and vapid appears even the bitterest

of these modern antagonisms, compared with the party-spirit engendered by the deep-seated injuries of civil war!—To stir up the soul of man into genuine partisanship, his pecuniary interests must be affected. The loss of a ministerial salary, administering to the daily cake of life rather than to its daily bread, is scarcely worth bringing into comparison with the tribulation of having a fair house razed to the ground, or blazing to the sky,—woods hacked down,—farms ravaged,—nay, perhaps the dear ones of our heart given up to slaughter before our eyes. Such are the injuries which create heroes and patriots; such the losses which, in England's olden time, set the lances of York and Lancaster in rest, or, at a later period, stimulated the remnant of chivalry to oppose those roundhead Puritans whom the spirit moved to plunder and slaughter their fellow-countrymen in the abused name of the Lord!

It is not, however, in the hour of strife that the force of party hatred roots itself strongest in the heart. The feeling does not acquire its deadliest force till, seated by the desolated fireside and missing one of its accustomed treasures, we revert to the origin of the bereavement,—recall forgotten grievances,—revive effaced recollections,—dwell upon those frightful tumults when a fellow-countryman became a deadly enemy, and our dwellings resounded with the cry of pillage and violence breathed in the accents of our native land!

Such was the state of national feeling in England at the period of the Restoration. Things had been done and suffered which it behoved the sufferers to steep in oblivion. Country neighbours who, a few years before, had been opposed hand to hand in unrelenting strife, were required to meet at public convocations, as having no cause of discord; the words they had uttered, the cruelties they had mutually inflicted, were all to be obliterated by the act of amnesty which afforded leisure to King Charles for his licentious orgies at Whitehall, and to bumpkin squires for hanging up their buff jerkins and steel head-pieces on pegs in their musty halls, scouring up the battered arms which were not doomed by act of parliament to become rusty like their resentment or their pride. Scarce a neighbourhood throughout the kingdom that was thoroughly at its ease. The Londoners had their commerce and their recreations, —the courtiers their fêtes and processions; but the rural population had nothing to divert its sense of injury. The evidence of evil was still hatefully before before them. Fair estates fallen to ruin,—fair edifices overthrown,—naked hills in place of thriving plantations, and roofless halls instead of goodly manor-houses. The stately minster lacked its desecrated shrine—

> levelled, when fanatic Brook
> The fair cathedral spoiled and took;—

the lonely hearth—the helpless orphan—its master

and father, martyrs of unavailing and unrewarded devotion.

In one of the most beautiful of the woodland districts on the borders of Northamptonshire, there abided an individual—rich even to overflowing in the best gifts accordable by nature or society,—whom the evil chances of those disastrous times had visited with searching influence. The Lady Lovell, in her twenty-sixth year, was beautiful and intelligent beyond the common lot;—nobly born, nobly allied, immensely wealthy. Yet with these and other means and appliances of happiness, such as good health, good humour, good sense, good principles, a hopeless blight was upon her destinies. Scarcely to be termed a wife,—scarcely to be termed a widow,—the love of every heart was hers, save that of the man who, as she was required by law to share his title and estates, can be designated no otherwise than as her husband.

Lovell House was a noble seat, situated on a gentle eminence, overlooking the river Nen; surrounded by a stately park, with vast domains widely outstretching its enclosures. The place was antiquated, it is true; having undergone no material alteration since the latter days of Elizabeth, who had feasted within its walls on her progress to the grander domicile of her favourite chancellor. But few mansions in the county were to compare with the old hall of Lovell; for, in addition to its formal groves, avenues, and pleasance, its young mistress had chosen to indulge

for its adornment in choice whimsies of her own, by creating in the midst of a straggling coppice of beech and elms fringing the western boundary of the pleasance, a garden of fair shrubberies and parterres, wild and beautiful as Ariel's wand might have called into existence amid "the still vex'd Bermoothes."

Nor were the usual accessaries of country pleasures wanting at Lovell, albeit its liege lady could do but inadequate justice to their entertainment. The ancient mews, the old kennel and stables of the hall, were carefully kept up; and Lady Lovell, though a somewhat subdued representative of the barons bold who had of old taken pleasure in the sport, was, perhaps, the best horsewoman who ever laid aside her riding-gear to resume the gentler occupations of the lute or pen, the distaff or the needle.

Dwelling alone at the hall as lady paramount of the vast estate, she fell not into the usual faults of female sovereignty. Her rule was neither arbitrary nor capricious. The afflictions and vexations of life had subdued rather than soured her temper. The ancient servitors of the house adored their lovely mistress,—the tenants respected her,—the poor (save when in the lady's hearing) never named her without blessings; for Anne Lovell had a proud and generous spirit, and abided not the servility of overstrained gratitude.

Nevertheless, with all this affluence of love and prosperity, no one could look observantly upon the

countenance of the lovely lady, without discerning a certain "unquiet glancing of the eye" that betrayed a spirit ill at ease. It was clear that Lady Lovell was not happy. When she returned from her brisk rides across the hills upon her favourite mare, Black Maud, whose beauty and spirit were well matched with her own, any one might perceive, when she dashed aside her beaver and threw open her velvet vest, that though her fair cheek glowed with the exercise, and her large dark eye beamed with momentary excitement, no joyous smile visited her compressed lips. Even the gleams of satisfaction called up into her countenance by opportunities for the indulgence of her beneficent propensities, or proof that some antecedent good action had brought forth its fruits, were transient as those of winter sunshine. There was discontent in her soul,—impatience in her gestures. It was probable that she had suffered grievous wrong; for, in moments of unreserve, it was apparent that her opinions and feelings were under the dominion of a deep-seated indignation.

Such were the comments of the casual observer. But when curiosity induced him to ascertain the facts of the case, his wonder was of short duration. Lady Lovell's domestic history was too well known, and her country neighbours were too ready to recount a tale so eventful, to prolong the suspense of strangers interested by her beauty and singularities to make further inquiry.

Lady Lovell, in her own right an heiress, was the only daughter of a Rutlandshire esquire, the representative of a Protestant branch of the ancient house of Heneage of Hainton. Himself an only son, and bearing token in his puny nature and physical infirmities of the over-solicitude usually attending the breeding of a mother's darling, Miles Heneage at thirty years of age was a confirmed valetudinarian, absorbed by the contemplation of his own ailments, and utterly incapacitated for social enjoyment. Every better instinct of his nature seemed merged in selfish hypochondriacism.

Even his loyalty, a distinguished characteristic of his family, became enfeebled by the influence of habitual supineness; and though his heart was with the failing cause of the king, he took no active part in support of the royal standard, nor was known to offer the slightest resistance to parliamentarian usurpation. Certain of the Puritan generals who, having occasion to traverse the fertile pastures of Dalesdene Grange on their march from the northern counties to Marston Moor, had been moved to cast a longing eye upon the inheritance of an avowed malignant and hereditary adherent of the house of Stuart, were at length compelled to direct their covetous views to other quarters. Miles Heneage was never known to commit himself by incontinence of tongue; nor, from the moment of the death of the king, did he ever resist levies or withhold taxes

demanded in the name of the government by force established.

For to his natural inertness was now superadded the influence of profound mental affliction. Conscious of his unfitness to match with a person of his own degree, Mr. Heneage, on his final retirement to Dalesdene Grange, had formed an alliance scouted as disgraceful by his kinsfolk and acquaintance, but regarded by himself as a pledge of domestic happiness beyond his justifiable hopes:—his young and lovely wife (the daughter of a wealthy farmer in the neighbouring vale of Belvoir) being not only mild and docile in disposition, but sincerely attached to the man who had overlooked her deficiencies of birth and education.

Scarcely, however, had his kind-hearted wife modified her tastes and habits to suit with those of her sedentary spouse, when poor Heneage was required to resign her to the grave, and accept a peevish, helpless infant, in exchange for the gentle and intelligent companionship of its mother. At first, indeed, he was almost tempted to reject the innocent cause of his bereavement, and, for many months after his loss, was unable to bear the presence of the child. It was not till its tiny features began to assume a faint resemblance to the loved one who was gone,—the crushed violet he had been the means of rescuing from obscurity,—that he took the slightest interest in its existence—an interest increasing day by

day into that painful intensity of love, only to be appreciated by the parents of an only child.

Mr. Heneage at last discovered what a comforter for his sorrows had been vouchsafed him in his little daughter;—what an occupation for his lonely leisure —what a brightener of his dreary prospects. His house and lands grew precious to him from the moment he felt that something of his own, *and of hers*, was hereafter to enjoy them. His knowledge—and it was extensive and various—acquired importance in his eyes when he considered that it would enable him to monopolize the task of preceptorship to this only blessing; nay, the very time which had often hung heavy on his hands, seemed to have converted its leaden minutes into gold, now that every one of them served to develope some new charm or faculty in the cherub with which Providence had adorned his solitude.

Little Anne was illimitably privileged!—Never yet had child such prerogative of wilfulness and mischief. For Heneage, though a man of accomplished mind, had none of that knowledge of the world which is indispensable to render available the powers of the strongest understanding—like the hand-polish, without which the sterling metal of a fine weapon must remain useless. His infirmities had kept him aloof from society. His wealth, rendering him a person of high account in his family and household, had deprived him of the hard lessons which even domestic seclusion may afford. Having never been taxed with

blame, he had a right to fancy himself faultless; and whether he wedded with a farmer's daughter or spoiled his lovely little heiress, his tenants were not the less loyal in their opinion, or his servants less sedulous in reporting it, that "the squire could do no wrong." The same adulation which converted the reigning sovereign into a despot, converted Miles Heneage into a harmless egotist, and his daughter into a termagant and romp.

For the latter, however, there was more hope of amendment than for the sickly recluse. Reason had not yet done its work to tame down the eccentricities engendered by her peculiar position; and even when, at ten years old, Anne Lovell was accustomed to spring upon the wildest colt in the pastures, and with her long dark hair streaming to breezes as wilful as herself, and her white hands fixed in its mane, gallop away, regardless of the threats of her nurse, Dame Audrey, to report her indiscretion to her father, —there was an archness in the expression of her lovely face that implied somewhat beyond the vacant sportiveness of youth.

Interfering friends, meanwhile, were not wanting, to remonstrate with Mr. Heneage upon the extraordinary education he was bestowing upon a girl likely to be so splendidly endowed. Her maternal grandfather had already enriched her with the amassings of a life of industry; and the estates of Dalesdene were strictly entailed upon her. Yet her train-

ing was scarcely beyond that of the lads of the parish grammar-school,—a strange breeding for one predestined to be a lady in the land!

Among the remonstrants was the only person who shared with the monument in Dalesdene church an influence over the affections of Heneage;—Arthur Lord Lovell, the playmate of his school-days, who, in early times, had rescued the life of young Heneage from imminent peril, from which period a tender friendship had existed between them. Their union was in some degree interrupted when the alliance of Lovell with the daughter of the Earl of Bristol, rendered the habits of Lovell House too formal for the enjoyment of the infirm Rutlandshire squire; and thenceforward, though domiciled at only thirty miles' distance from each other, the friends corresponded oftener than they met. But learning the death of his friend's young wife, Lord Lovell had hastened to Dalesdene to console the afflicted Heneage, and officiate as chief mourner at the funeral ceremony he was incapacitated from attending; and though his lordship no longer combated Heneage's determination once again to sleep from under his own roof, he became an occasional guest of the squire, to deposit in his bosom his political anxieties, and deplore the falling cause of royalty and the Stuarts. On these occasions his lordship could not refrain from expressing his regret at the hoyden habits of the only daughter of his friend.

"It is my fate to be everywhere thwarted by witnessing mistaken systems of education!" said Lovell. "All the time I can spare from public affairs, is devoted to disputing with Lady Lovell touching the breeding she is bestowing on her son;—a likely, hopeful lad, were he not trained like a Benedictine acolyte, rather than as befits the heir of my name. But the youth is so idolized by his mother, that, had she her will, she would pen him in a glass-case to save him from vulgar contact or bodily hazard. If yonder tanned and mettled lass of yours, my dear Miles, were half as delicately tinctured as my Arthur, or were Arthur as clever a marksman or bold a rider as your lass, both would be gainers. Pr'ythee reflect, my dear friend, that the girl is gaining growth, and that it were an unseemly thing did Miss Heneage of Dalesdene Grange exhibit at some future time a trace of the strange propensities which you are leaving unchecked in little Anne."

"The girl is, as you say, gaining growth," replied the squire, pushing out of the way the dog's-cared Virgil which had ministered in the morning lesson of his daughter. "Let her gain health and strength as well as growth; *that* is the point on which I am at present anxious. I must not have this second treasure prematurely wrested from me; and whether she can bob a curtsey as daintily as your wanton damsels at Whitehall, or hang over a French lute, or keep measure in a cinque-pace, I care no more than whe-

ther there be ten grey hairs, or twenty, in Dobbin's tail."

"But others will some day have a right to care," cried Lovell warmly. "Think you that a husband of the birth and breeding you naturally expect for the heiress of such noble property, will bear to find her ignorant of the common accomplishments of her sex?"

"*Expect* a husband for my girl?" exclaimed Heneage, with an air of consternation. "Would you have me look forward to losing the delight of my widowed days,—my joy, my consolation, my only, only earthly blessing?—Go to!—The mere thought of her wedding with a stranger would drive me to distraction!"

"Whatever the thought may do, the fact is a consideration to which I counsel you to reconcile yourself," replied Lord Lovell gravely. "The child bears indications of rare beauty; but were she to turn out black as the rook, the lands of Dalesdene would wash your Ethiop white. Wooers she will never lack; and unless all this mad rough-riding, and shooting at marks, and fording of brooks, should harden her nature as well as her frame, those dark eyes will some day discover that there are younger and more gallant men in the world than her father and his chaplain!"

The remark provoked a heavy sigh from poor Miles Heneage; but, in the sequel, it influenced his conduct towards Anne. A few weeks afterwards he

took into his establishment a decayed gentlewoman, the widow of a distant kinsman, to assist him in the education of his heiress; and Mistress Corbet being a woman of sense, who did not in the first instance draw the rein of government too tight, she eventually acquired such influence over her pupil as served to perfect the manners and disposition of the highly-gifted heiress of Dalesdene.

Most opportune for her welfare, indeed, proved the suggestion of her father's friend; for within a year of Mistress Corbet's instalment, Mr. Heneage experienced a paralytic seizure, by which he was rendered wholly helpless. His intellects were only temporarily affected, but it was clear he would never recover strength to cross the threshold of his chamber of sickness.

Debarred, therefore, by necessity as well as inclination, from taking any active part in the contest by which the calamities of the nation were now brought to an issue, Heneage was content to follow in fancy the movements of the rival armies; and Naseby and Marston Moor inflicted wounds upon his spirit, such as were little conjectured by the witnesses of his infirm egotism. Convinced, from the period of General Cromwell's return from his triumphant Irish expedition, that the cause of the Stuarts was fallen beyond retrieval, he sank into a lethargic despondency, interrupted only by querulous ejaculations of "Poor country!" — "Unhappy England!"—which induced

his daughter and her governess to attribute to patriotic affliction the despondency of the invalid. They little suspected that the poor palsied man was "still harping on his daughter:"—sometimes dreading that the inheritance derived from ancestors of well-known loyalty would be wrested from a feeble girl by the despotic hand of the parliamentarians;—sometimes apprehending that at some future moment the wealthy heiress of Dalesdene might be compelled into an alliance with some roundhead general—some canting rebel—some blood-stained regicide; and thus, excited to a warmer frame of loyalty, his whole soul engaged itself in the prospects of the young king, who had once more raised in Scotland the standard of the royal cause.

It no longer surprised him that his friend Lord Lovell, so staunch an adherent of the throne and altar, should hasten to offer his loyal support to the youthful sovereign, thus forced to wrestle for his rights. Every evening did Mistress Corbet and her charge follow, for his satisfaction, on the map, the movements of Cromwell's forces, and those of Montrose and Argyle; listening patiently to Heneage's prognostications of ensuing triumph to the latter, which the news of the morrow never failed to gainsay! His whole discourse was of the perils encountered by his noble friend, and the honours likely to crown his efforts on the eventual re-establishment of Charles Stuart!

It was only after assisting to support him into the adjoining chamber, and smooth his pillow for the night, that the kind-hearted girl ventured to entreat her gouvernante would use her efforts to disabuse the poor man of these unavailing hopes, which might cause the last fatal reverses to fall too heavily upon his soul.

CHAPTER II.

It was a dreary evening towards the close of August, in the disastrous year 1651. Throughout the day a mistling rain had imparted to the aspect of the country the premature desolation of autumn; while, with the pertinacity of a cuckoo-clock, the hypochondriac of Dalesdene marked the lapse of the hours and their quarters, by his monotonous ejaculations of "Poor England!" till even his daughter's spirits were tamed down by his depression. Retreating from the hearth where Heneage's valetudinarian habits required, even in summer, a few embers to be kindled, she took her station beside the still unshuttered windows, peeping out through the dusk over the paddock in the midst of which the Grange was seated;—involuntarily comparing the cheerless monotony of the scene with the brilliant visions of Tasso's chivalrous creation, into which she had been that morning inducted, under the learned auspices of Mistress Corbet.

While her thoughts were busy in comparing the valour of Goffredo's red-cross knights with the now neglected heroes of her dog's-eared Virgil, Anne Heneage was startled by seeing what appeared to be a human form glance stealthily across the lawn, and at length approach so near the house as to command a view of what was passing within. Repressing the exclamation into which she had been half betrayed, she continued at her post of observation till the mysterious intruder disappeared behind a thicket of lilac bushes skirting the offices; and Anne, resuming her place at the hearth's side, was about to communicate in a whisper to her gouvernante the suspicious transit of which she had been witness, when the door was carefully opened and closed by old Gervas, the venerable attendant of her father, who proceeded to fasten the window-shutters and draw together the serge curtains for the night. After completing his task, Gervas drew towards his master's chair, and having ascertained that, though silent and still, Mr. Heneage was not asleep, demanded, in an audible whisper, whether he would be pleased to receive a guest.

"A *guest*—at *this* hour?" cried the astonished invalid. "Marry, no!—and I wonder thou shouldst disturb me by such a question! But, pr'ythee, who is it, good Gervas, that shows me such small respect as to intrude at Dalesdene Grange almost at my sleeping-time? Is it that tedious fellow, Dr. Drum-

cush of Cottesmore,—or the fat major from Oakham?"

"It is one whose presence here is ever right welcome to your honour," replied Gervas respectfully. Then bending lower towards the ear of his feeble master, he added, "Under your pleasure, sir, it is no other than my Lord Lovell."

"And you have made all this ado, instead of ushering him into my presence?" exclaimed his master angrily.

"I was fain to have all sure, previous to introducing his lordship into your honour's parlour," replied Gervas. "His lordship is, as it were, a fugitive. His lordship brings bad tidings from the armies in the North. The troops of the commonwealth are within a day's march of us. Scouts are already on the way, and were his noble lordship to fall into their hands——"

"Enough—enough!" cried Heneage, recovering sense and energy the moment Lord Lovell's danger became apparent. "It is with himself I must commune of these things. Prepare refreshments, Gervas,—prepare the secret chamber,—send all the knaves to bed,—find errands for the babbling chamber-wenches, and close up the house for the night."

Ere he could conclude his instructions, Gervas introduced into the chamber the lofty figure which had excited the alarm of Anne. Withdrawing from his face the flapped beaver with which it was overshaded,

Lord Lovell disclosed the worn and haggard countenance of the fugitive cavalier.

"All is lost, then?" demanded Heneage, pressing cordially between his own the outstretched hand of his friend; "or, alas! I should not behold thee here!"

"All is lost!" replied the hoarse voice of Lovell, struggling with contending emotions. "In the North the king's troops have yielded, like willows before the wind."

"And the young king——?"

"Was safe when, three nights ago, I quitted him on the borders of Lancashire. His majesty is making the best of his way, by forced marches, towards his friends in the West."

"It bodes no good, my dear Lovell, that you should have parted from him in such a strait. Has any misunderstanding——"

"None—none!" cried Lovell, hastily interrupting him. "I quitted his majesty but by his own especial behest. A few thousands in nobles or jacobuses were of more import to his progress than one poor head to counsel, or one poor arm to defend. I am straight from home—from Lovell Hall, whither I betook myself to tax to the last penny my personal resources. My Lady Lovell, who hath retreated thither with her son and his tutor, foreseeing, with womanly apprehension, our ruin consequent upon this failure of the royal cause, hath been of late most remiss in forward-

ing to Scotland the funds required by my needs, and those of the prince; and it was fitting that I should remonstrate with her in person. The rapid advance of the parliamentary troops made it indispensable that my journey should be secret. The rest," continued Lord Lovell, glancing in an agitated manner towards Mistress Corbet and her charge,—"the rest for thy private ear."

"Leave us, my dear Anne," said Heneage; and his companion having quitted the room, he fixed his inquiring eyes upon the anxious countenance of his guest.

"From my wife," continued Lord Lovell, "I have met with unexpected and most harassing opposition. At another moment I might have found no great difficulty in thawing by argument the obstinacy of her present determinations. But I lacked time and spirit for the task. During my absence she has acted as my agent; my funds are in her keeping, and nothing I have been able to urge will induce her either to resign her trust or facilitate a levy of money which I have solemnly pledged myself to the king to make upon my property for his immediate use. The army is in want of necessaries—is in long arrears of pay. The men are dispirited—the Scotch are deserting in thousands. Not a recruit is to be raised—not a stiver of supplies is to be had. In short, unless I am able to fulfil my engagements to his majesty, our last hope is extinguished. In this miserable extremity my

thoughts, dear Heneage, recurred to *you*. Are you able—are you willing to assist us? In my own behalf," continued Lovell, raising his head from its dejected attitude, "God knows I am not apt to play the beggar; but, for the young and unhappy king, I would do this and more, and rejoice in the indignity."

"For him or for yourself my best aid shall never be twice called for," replied Heneage, cordially. "But, on the spur of this instant need, it may scarce suffice the occasion. Every noble I can command is at your disposal."

"Thanks—thanks! I expected no less of you," replied his friend. "But, alas! I expected as much of my son's mother, and the woman (God forgive her!) hath vilely failed me. Such protestations of loyalty as I have heard aforetime from her lips!—And now she fancies the royal cause lost past retrieval, she not only denies me my own, but presumes to revile me for not throwing up my commission, and making good terms for myself with the lord general! Out on her!—she has stirred my blood! What hope dare I entertain of the son who shares in so pitiful a nature?"

"Woman is the weaker vessel," replied Heneage, consolingly. "What right have we to expect fortitude or heroism of those to whom such virtues are not appointed? But, pr'ythee, tell me—what sum will square with your more pressing demand, and at what hour must it be forthcoming?"

"If I could start before daybreak," replied Lord Lovell, "the king's mind would be the sooner eased of its cares. But if this be impossible, I must even abide till to-morrow's twilight, my person being known in this district, where scouts are abroad in all directions. Two sure sergeants of the guard, who accompanied me in order to take charge of the treasure I was in hopes of raising at Lovell House, lie in wait with my horses yonder at Scaresden Farm, whereof the tenant is an ancient servitor of our house."

"And the amount required?" again demanded Heneage, rightly guessing that his friend hesitated, from motives of delicacy, to specify his demand.

"Six thousand pounds was the sum which I required at the hands of my wife," replied Lovell, lowering his voice, "having given her many weeks' advisal to prepare my tenants and debtors for the levy."

"Six thousand!"—faintly ejaculated Heneage; "and I have at this moment scarcely a twelfth part of it in the house! During these disturbances, I am careful to avoid any vast charge of money, little, alas! anticipating the occurrence of a demand like this."

"A few hundred pounds were as a drop of water in the ocean of our necessities," replied Lord Lovell, mournfully. "Nevertheless, since more may not be, I am in no position to disdain the aid of a single jacobus. Bestow with me, therefore, my dearest friend, what sum you may; and I will onward with my bad

tidings towards Worcestershire, whither my brother Richard and a chosen troop ride as escorts of the king."

"Take at least a few hours' rest and refreshment," said the poor nervous, harassed invalid, "during which we will make up to the last doit what money is in the house; and then——ha!" cried he, smiting his forehead, as if enlightened by a sudden thought,—"how long, saidst thou, was thy utmost sojourn at Dalesdene?—Canst thou peradventure accord me twelve hours' delay?"

"More, if to obtain any serious advantage to the king," replied Lovell, frankly.

"In one word," resumed his friend, "in the hands of my notary at Oakham lies a sum of more than eight thousand pounds, the property of my daughter, which we are about to invest in land on her account. Elias Wright is co-guardian and executor with myself of her grandfather's will, and can scarcely refuse the money as a loan."

Lord Lovell shook his head. "As a guardian and trustee, *I* should refuse on scruples of conscience to accede to any such request," said he. "But the man, you say, is a notary; and I am willing to engage and mortgage my lands to the full amount, which may probably determine his compliance."

"Or I my own," replied Heneage. "But as those must become the portion of my daughter, to whom this money belongs——"

"Anne will one day be a mighty heiress," observed Lord Lovell, carelessly.

"Alack! who can foresee from one day to another to whose hands his lands and gear may fall?"—ejaculated Heneage. "A poor ailing sufferer like myself has small chance to preserve his substance from the grasp of the Philistines! When I am gone, dear Lovell, it is to thy protection I shall bequeath her happiness; imploring thee to wed the poor wench betimes with some honourable husband, to become a protection to her from the chances of these evil days."

"Were my son a few years older," Lord Lovell began—

"And what then?" eagerly interrupted Heneage. "He is *her* senior by a year or two, and, though young, has his father's experience to guide his conduct. Wert thou of the same mind, Lovell, not only should they be man and wife, but, to circumvent the possibility of compulsory wardship by government, I would even now ensure their union by an immediate contract."

"God send no worse alliance to my son!" ejaculated Lovell. "The match is great beyond my hopes or views for him, and comes with double welcome, that it would cement and strengthen our ancient bonds of friendship."

"Then, pr'ythee, why not conclude it at once?" cried Heneage. "The times are critical—Heaven

knows when we may meet again! He who would overmaster fortune, must grasp it roughly that it escape not. Why not sign and seal at once, and ensure the consent of Master Wright to our disposal of the trust-money?"

"You jest with me, my old friend," cried Lovell. "Though assured of my son's consent (who is a mild and duteous youth), his presence must needs be wanting to the contract."

"Six hours would convey thy mandate as far as Lovell House," replied Heneage; "six more, suffice to bring him hither. By noon to-morrow the young man might reach Dalesdene, and the attorney be on the spot to frame a hasty contract to be enlarged hereafter. The sum of money which I would fain see transferred to thy hands, would thus become his property, a charge to the same amount being made on the lands of Lovell for the behoof of my daughter."

"Better, perhaps, defer these measures till the darkness of the times shall have cleared away," replied Lovell, gravely.

"And if, in lieu of clearing, they darken, even to the extinction of royalty and its adherents," cried Heneage, eagerly, "must my girl wed with some canting puritan,—some starveling Praise-God-Barebones,—who may foreclose thy estate for the amount of her grandfather's fortune, lent to thee in fee?—Lovell!—as we love these children, let us make them

one, so that no convulsion of the state may henceforth divide them. Young as they are, years must elapse ere they abide together in wedlock. But be those years a time of happy assurance that their destinies and fortunes are secured by the foresight of their parents!"

To refuse for his son an alliance in every point of view so advantageous, appeared ungracious and absurd. To the possibility of such an arrangement with his friend, Lord Lovell had sometimes remotely adverted; but fearing that Heneage might desire for his heiress a spouse in direct enjoyment of rank and fortune, he had scorned to avail himself of his ascendancy over the affections of the valetudinarian to forward his project. The alliance was now, however, of Heneage's own suggestion; and deeply penetrated as was Lord Lovell with the precariousness of the cause in which his destinies were involved, and overcome by a heavy presentiment that his career was approaching its close, he could not refuse himself the gratification of witnessing and sanctifying an event securing prosperity to his only son and future representative.

After some further discussion, a messenger bearing a letter and signet from Lord Lovell, was despatched across the country, requiring young Arthur and his preceptor to set off instantly for Dalesdene, without communicating, even to his lady-mother, the instructions they had received; while, on the other hand, Miles Heneage despatched old Gervas to

Oakham, requesting the immediate presence of Master Wright, the notary. Before midnight, instructions were given for the drawing out of the necessary instruments; and as the prudent trustee luckily concurred in his patron's views of the honour conferred by so high an alliance upon the daughter of Heneage of Dalesdene, he undertook that his clerks should watch and work all night in the engrossment of the contract; and that one half of the sum deposited in his chests, on the demise of her maternal grandfather, should, on the morrow, be at the disposal of the noble father-in-law of the future Lady Lovell.

One department of the family arrangements still remained to be provided for, which, wearied and exhausted as he was by his unusual exertions, the infirm father felt disposed to defer till the following morning. Young Lovell could not possibly arrive at the Grange before noon; and it would be time enough to acquaint his darling Anne on the morrow of the fatherly care he was taking of her future fortunes. Having two years before her wherein to prepare herself for becoming a wife, two hours might surely suffice to prepare her for becoming a bride.

"The child hath retired to rest," quoth Heneage to his noble guest; "and methinks we can do no better than follow her example. In the morning I will expound to my daughter the motive of all this haste. It might cause her ill dreams, were she fore-

warned to-night that it is the eve of her marriage-day."

And Mr. Heneage was so far justified, that the same consciousness, instead of causing ill dreams to himself, deprived him altogether of rest. All night did he ponder over the hasty engagement he had made! The rash proposal had originated in an impulse of his own—he had no one but himself to blame. But he began to fear he had been too precipitate. Not, indeed, as regarded worldly matters. As far as pecuniary interests were concerned, he knew that they were secure in the hands of the noble and upright Lovell. It was the bridegroom, of whose merits he was comparatively doubtful. Already young Lovell had twice or thrice visited the Grange; and his demeanour had, on both occasions, provoked the mockery of the lively Anne. Though his junior in years, the girl had evidently the advantage of him, and how could Mr. Heneage be assured that she would content herself to promise love, honour, and obedience, to one whom she had hitherto derided as an unmannerly schoolboy?

He almost wished that Lady Lovell might refuse to consent to her son's departure from Lovell House at the mysterious summons of his father.

CHAPTER III.

The morrow, as if conscious that it had business of festive import in hand, dawned brightly at Dalesdene. The foliage and greensward, refreshed by the showers of the day preceding, resumed their summer brightness. New blossoms expanded,—new fragrance floated on the breeze;—all seemed in fitting mood to do honour to a bridal day.

Unconscious, however, as the blossoms or the leaves that any event of especial interest awaited her, the bright-eyed Anne shook back her clustering curls with joy as she looked out upon the freshened landscape, and, on being summoned some hours earlier than usual to her father's dressing-room, wondered only whether they were already rid of their ill-omened guest.

On reaching the chamber, she found the solitary old gentleman seated in his flowered night-gown and easy chair, stirring his chocolate with an air more

pensive than usual; and on inquiring with her ordinary gaiety, "Did you send for me?—do you want me, dearest papa?"—he reiterated so many times, and so tenderly, "Come hither, child!— draw near, Anne —nearer—nearer still"—that, instead of taking a formal seat by his side according to her wont, she kneeled down on the silken cushion at his feet, and waited till he should unfold his pleasure.

Recalling to mind that it was at the close of one of Lord Lovell's former visits she had been first reproved by her father for her wild horsemanship and lack of maidenly discretion, the panting damsel fully expected to have some further fault found with the ordering of her attire, or the uncouthness of her address, and was, in fact, as little prepared for the overwhelming intelligence at length falteringly communicated by her father, as if it had been vouchsafed on the first day of her release from leading-strings and a bib and tucker.

"*Marry!*—become a lady in the land!—a wedded —wedded wife!—a matron—the mistress of a household!"——

For her life's sake, the giddy girl could not have contained herself at the notion; and covering her fair face with her hands as the words escaped her lips, she laughed long and unconstrainedly. But when, on looking up, she saw her old father's eyes suffused with tears, and a certain stern sadness diffused over his brow, she checked herself in a moment. The

pearly teeth became again invisible, the sweet dimples disappeared; while with dutiful earnestness she took her father's withered hand between her own, and soothed it with silent caresses.

"I would the thing were matter of mirth!" faltered old Heneage, as if in answer to the appeal. "I would it were a day of joy, as becomes a wedding-day to be!—But, alas! my child—my girl—my darling,—these nuptials chance under heavy auspices. The prospects of the country are all but hopeless; the prospects of the house of Lovell gloomy, as becomes those of the true subject when declines the star of his sovereign; and henceforward, my daughter, thy destinies will take the colour of theirs. Though for two years to come—sunshine or storm—thou wilt still abide with me as though this match had never been, while thy bridegroom completes the measure of study indispensable to one of his great estate,—still, ever as the wind blows with the Lovells, must it blow with my shorn lamb."

Touched by the melancholy tone of her father's voice, Anne became grave in earnest; for at the word "bridegroom" the idea of Arthur Lovell recurred for the first time to her mind. Arthur Lovell!—a heavy, shy, mannerless schoolboy!—a dolt, who had frightened her Angora cat into fits by fixing a bell to its morocco collar,—who had got her greyhound whipped by the keepers, by beguiling poor Lily into the mysteries of poaching!—who had engraved with

a diamond a planisphere of comets and meteors on the glasses of Mistress Corbet's spectacles!—who knew not Tasso from Ariosto, a peony from a rose!—a straight-haired, round-shouldered boy,—sans taste, sans eyes, sans promise of amendment!

The light-hearted Anne now panted in earnest—and when, discerning her vexation, her father proceeded to acquaint her that her contract of marriage was already half engrossed, and his word wholly pledged to its execution, her previous flightiness gave way to a sudden burst of tears, as persevering as the freshening showers of the preceding day.

Mr. Heneage now begged her to retire and take time;—*not* to reconcile herself to the match, *that* he seemed to fancy a matter of course;—but to prepare herself for the ceremony. At the spur of the moment, no grand parade was possible. The richest of her robes must be assumed to do honour to the occasion, lest Lord Lovell should imagine her indifferent to the honour of entering his family, and becoming daughter-in-law to her father's earliest friend; and as the invalid issued his instructions to her to be as brave as her store of tires might admit, he unlocked a drawer of his scrutoire, and delivered to her hand a double string of costly pearls, on which he gazed with such wistful eyes, that Anne discerned in a moment they must have been the property of her mother.

Obedient to his wish, she rose and was about to retreat; when, ere she could cross the room, Lord

Lovell entered, and her father, checking her departure, bade her kneel and ask his blessing. Raising her instantly to his arms, the noble friend of her father pressed her cordially to his bosom; imprinting upon her pure young forehead a kiss so truly paternal, that for a moment the misgivings of the agitated maiden were almost reassured.

"Lady Lovell can surely never raise objections to so sweet a daughter-in-law?" was his lordship's secret reflection, struck by the ingenuous expression of her lovely face. "What though ignoble blood be in her veins, a noble spirit must surely animate these speaking eyes,—those graceful movements."

"Lord Lovell cannot think so harshly of me as I have supposed," was the maiden's musing. "He would not look thus kindly on me, were he not inclined to love and cherish me as a daughter. Yea, henceforward I shall have two fathers to caress me and protect!"

And with another hurried salutation to them both, she fled from the room, to disclose in the arms of Mistress Corbet the wonderful tale of her promotion. Scarcely, however, had she entered the presence of the gouvernante, when the red eyes and quivering lips of her second mother apprised her that the secret had already transpired. The good woman had been weeping bitterly, to find her pupil's destinies so hastily, and, as it appeared to *her*, unadvisedly disposed of. It was a poor consolation to her to know

that, previous even to his disclosing his views to his daughter, her patron had thought it right to announce them to herself.

"Doubtless, my dear child," pleaded Mistress Corbet to her pupil, "this measure, which to ourselves appears so hasty, hath been long projected by the wisdom and tenderness of your father. From the period of yours, and—and Mr. Lovell's—birth, you have been probably destined for each other."

And the effort made by the gouvernante to invest with the dignified title of "Mr. Lovell" the unmannerly lad to whose name she was accustomed to append a string of opprobrious epithets, overcame once more the gravity of the girlish bride; and, surmounting her fit of the dismals, she clapped her hands and laughed aloud in glee.

"Come, come! speak out for once. We are not yet a wedded couple. Call him as you would have done yesterday—that graceless, gross, untutored savage of a boy!" cried Anne, throwing her arms around her friend.

"My dear child forgets herself," remonstrated the grave preceptress, shocked at her levity.

"I would I *could!*" retorted Miss Heneage, shrugging her shoulders; "for, good faith! I have little just now in my thoughts which it is pleasant to remember. Yet must I make the best of all!—My good father hath bid me let him see no peevish

looks upon the matter. And, after all, *mamma mia*, since the Lovells, father and son, are to quit Dalesdene the moment after the ceremony (which is to be performed at sunset), and years must elapse ere I behold them again, the wars of these troublous times, which play the tyrant even with the lives of kings, may render me a widow ere I am well aware of being a wife."

"In sooth they may!"—rejoined Mistress Corbet, wiping her eyes, and cheering up at this comfortable reflection.

"To-morrow I return to my studies, as though no bridal ring were upon my finger:—and here, on this spot, I promise my best of friends that she shall have as docile a pupil in sage Mistress Lovell as in madcap Nancy Heneage."

The good woman smiled affectionately upon the sportive girl; but shook her head mistrustfully at the pledge.

"I have hitherto had hard ado," said she, "to tame down that wild spirit to the proprieties of life. What am I to hope *now*, when emancipated from maidenly submission?—Mistress Lovell will not fail to deride the sermons of an officious gouvernante!"

"You think not as you say!" cried the warm-hearted girl. "Be still, as ever, my monitress, my guide, my friend!—Teach me to be patient this day with the untowardly cub who is to be my hus-

band (nay, fie! I will say so no more!), and to be henceforward as much a woman as may not prevent my remembering that I am still a child!"

But they had no further leisure for discussion. The silken robes were to be hastily fitted on,—the luxuriant locks of the lady bride to be reclaimed to order,—while the chamber of dais was prepared. News of the wedding was already rife in the house. The old housekeeper was in despair that the honours of her feast were curtailed for want of warning; the old butler found there would be scarce time to set the old October abroach, that had been brewed at the birth of his young lady; the gardeners complained that but for haste they might have welcomed the young lord (that was to be) under a triumphal arch of laurels; the chaplain grieved that he had no time to figure in a new surplice on an occasion foreshowing future preferment; and the attorney's clerks, who were scrivening away in Mr. Heneage's justice-room, grieved to be obliged to neglect the fair proportions of the German capitals, for which an extra item might have been made to figure in their master's bill of charges.

All day did household cares of this description besiege the careless ears of the trembling Anne. Already the world seemed in league to inaugurate her into the duties of matron-thrift; seeing that for the first time the housekeeper presumed to torment her touching the consistency of her chicken-soup,

the old nurse to demand whether the fine damask napery was to grace the board, and the old butler to require the recruiting of half the village to assist in burnishing up the service of family plate. All conspired to perplex her. Every tongue was prating of arras hangings, silver sconces, codlings and cream, saltcellars and flagons—of anything and everything but the bridegroom; and Anne, who was at first disposed to treat so highly his pretensions, grew gradually indignant at finding him of such small account.

Escaping first from the chamber where her father and Lord Lovell were dictating to the notary and his clerks, clause upon clause, touching the disposal, to the fiftieth generation, of farms, manors, and messuages, and next, from that where Mistress Corbet was giving audience to grumbling turnspits and awkward lacqueys, poor Anne retired at length to her maiden-bower, drew every bolt against intruders, and sat her down to muse and meditate alone.

A hectic spot burned upon either delicate cheek,—wild and hurried glances were in her eyes,—strange sounds in her ears,—strange tremors on her lip. Was not this all a dream? Could the even tenor of her monotonous life be really broken by so unprecedented a vicissitude? Was her springtide gone ere come? or rather was her summer dawning before the closing of springtide? Were her destinies already accomplished? Was there to be henceforth no doubt, no fear, no hope—*no love?*

for how could wild fifteen invest with associations of love the coarse schoolboy who had been drilled by his father to pronounce that hasty, unmeaning marriage vow?

Anne Heneage drew a deep sigh,—another and another; and never before had felt so much a child as now, when required to assume for the first time the self-possession of a woman. Pure from the corruptions of the world of silks and satins, flounces and furbelows, her notions of marriage were wholly ideal or wholly positive. She was familiar with the married estate only in the homely experience of her village pensioners, or according to the ineffable visions of poesy; and to the one, and the other, Arthur Lovell was alike repugnant. She detested the thoughts of tramping through life the hand-in-hand companion of such a boor; and could form no idea of the beller of cats, under the heroic helmet of Rinaldo, or inspired by the poetical frenzies of Orlando. In every point of view the animal was distasteful. She could suppose him kneeling down at his father's word of command (like Dash, her spaniel, couching at her own), to imprint a clumsy kiss upon her lily hand; he, blushing to his ears at his audacity—she to hers, at his awkwardness. Lucky that there were to be no spectators of this vexatious bridal! There would be no bearing the horse-laugh of their Oakham neighbours on witnessing the uncouth gallantries of the schoolboy groom.

Her father, meanwhile, had announced that at midday or soon thereafter, the young gentleman might be expected. But noon and an hour more were thrown into the past by the dial, and no bridegroom appeared! It is true that all was kept cautious and close within doors, while spies were stationed at given distances from the house, to afford timely information to Lord Lovell should strangers of suspicious appearance draw near, likely to betray to the men in authority in the town-council of Oakham the presence of a general of Charles Stuart within the limits of parliamentarian usurpation. None but the household and the confidential people of Elias Wright were apprised of his lordship's sojourn; and young Lovell had been duly admonished by his father to bring only a single attendant in addition to the two despatched for his escort. It was not likely, therefore, that he would arrive with tumult or stately presentment; and but that her window overlooked the court-yard, it would have been possible for him to install himself unnoticed.

But as the hours drew on, and no Arthur was announced, Anne Heneage grew first weary, and then uneasy. If, after all this note of preparation, the "laggard in love" should fail to make his appearance? If he should refuse to obey the summons and fulfil the engagements framed by his father? For a single moment, she felt that she could almost be moved to like him by so spirited an act of rebellion;

the next, she recalled to mind, with a blush, the shame of being a rejected bride,—rejected by a boy—rejected by an Arthur Lovell! Since morning, a world of womanly wisdom had ebbed and flowed over her heart; leaving behind, like other spring-tides upon the sand, gay shells and tangled weeds!—fragments of wreck.

At length, when three o'clock struck upon the harsh bell of the turret, Anne started up, exhausted by her feverish musings; and satisfied that she was safe for the day—that accident or obstinacy had secured her from the immediate solemnization of her nuptials—grew gay and girlish as before. She laughed outright when a glimpse in the glass revealed her slight figure encumbered with the unwonted trappings of bridal attire; and, stepping back, performed a mock curtsey to the respondent form of the would-be Mistress Lovell.

But, lo! as she rose laughing from the profound obeisance, a knock at her chamber door reformed her at once to gravity; and resuming her more imposing attitude, she opened it to admit Mistress Corbet.

The good woman was trembling from head to foot.

"Has any evil occurred?" cried Anne, recalling to mind the hazardous position of Lord Lovell.

"None, my dear child—none!"

"Then why thus agitated? You are in tears."

"I am sent to summon you to the presence of your father."

"Is he displeased, then? Does the disappointment weigh upon his mind?"

"What disappointment, my sweet girl?"

The name of Arthur Lovell vibrated for a moment on the lips of Mistress Corbet's blushing pupil.

"He awaits you for the signature of the contract," interrupted her venerable friend. "The marriage ceremony will afterwards be performed at the altar in your father's oratory. All is prepared. Nay—blench not now, my dearest Anne! Remember the self-possession you promised me. Remember the submission you owe to the fondest of fathers."

"I do, I do!" faltered Anne, pale with emotion, as she clung to the arm of Mrs. Corbet. "What else but submission to my father would determine me at this moment to risk my happiness on so fearful a casting of the die!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE morrow's sun was high above the horizon, and all at Dalesdene Grange had returned to its ordinary routine of dulness and monotony, before Anne Lovell sufficiently recovered her presence of mind to regard dispassionately the circumstances under which she had ceased to be Anne Heneage.

For she *was* wedded;—a wife, and yet a child;—a wife, and soon perhaps to become a widow! Already the sentiments with which she had been tempted to regard that hasty union were wholly changed. Her levity on the subject had given place to an almost womanly seriousness; and though her aversion to the match was strong as ever, she detested it less on account of her contempt of Arthur Lovell, than from being fully conscious of his contemptuous opinion of herself. Unjust as she had been in her estimation of the bridegroom's merits, he had shown himself equally prejudiced in disfavour of the bride!

Again and again did she recur to the amazement of the moment, when, having entered, with trembling steps and downcast eyes, the chamber wherein the fathers and the men of the law were awaiting her signature, she raised them timidly to seek the clumsy schoolboy to whom she was to pledge away her destinies; and discerned in his stead, standing at the right hand of Lord Lovell, a noble-looking youth,—in air, gesture and countenance, how unlike to him who, only three years before, had visited Dalesdene, to provoke the disgust of its inmates!—Reason was now enthroned upon his open brow;—his frame was nerved by the vigour of manhood,—his deportment restrained by the graces of high breeding; so handsome a stripling had never appeared in presence of the astonished Anne. *One* only change was dissatisfactory to her feelings! The mischievous boy had been her friend and admirer; the accomplished youth could scarcely restrain, even under the watchful eyes of his father, the disdain with which he regarded his bride!

At the moment when, startled by the novelty of the scene, the trembling girl, accepting a pen from the hand of Lord Lovell, subscribed her name for the last time as "Anne Heneage," and led by the noble lord into the adjoining oratory, pronounced her irrevocable vows of love, honour, and obedience,—all these discoveries had not yet appalled her heart. She beheld in her silent bridegroom a person overawed

and shy as herself; or rather, she beheld him not at all, so great was her emotion at being strained alternately to the bosom of her father and Mrs. Corbet, as though some awful circumstance were befalling her. But when, having quitted the oratory, she received in the adjoining saloon the compliments of the witnesses, it struck her that *one* voice was silent which ought to have been loudest in its courtesies; and raising her eyes once more in search of him she had just sworn to love and venerate, she saw him leaning against the carved wainscot,—cold, stern, pale, disdainful,—evidently scorning all pretence of taking part in the general joy!

They sat down to the wedding banquet, and things went more contrary than before. Old Elias Wright having been entrusted with the ordering of the festival, had taken upon him a notary's privilege of pleasantry, to place the chairs of the youthful bride and bridegroom side by side at the head of the table. And there they sat; Anne fair as a lily, growing paler and paler, and graver and graver; while young Lovell, dark as a sapling pine, seemed every moment sinking into gloomier reflections. There was evidently not a grain of sympathy between the young couple: nothing in common, nothing affording even in the remotest perspective, a promise of happiness or love!

Few as were the guests, Lord Lovell, though sorely ill at ease, felt himself called upon to divert their

attention from the evil dispositions of his son and heir, by the affectation of an empty hilarity. In spite of the cares that were gnawing at his heart (cares how tremendous, since they regarded the impending ruin of his king and country), he talked and jested, while he praised the Dalesdene venison and quaffed the Dalesdene wine. The notary's clerks, who had seen in him that morning a care-aged, ruined cavalier, pawning the honours of his house and the happiness of his son for gold to pave the predestined way of his unhappy prince, were amazed to find him so readily assume the jolly boon companion; indulging in snatches of old rhymes, so as occasionally to bring a blush to the discreet cheeks of gentle Mistress Corbet. They began to think that, had there been no Lady Lovell in the case, the father might have proved the apter bridegroom of the two; so loud and frequent were his challenges to his silent son to pledge a deep health to the lovely ladies of the county of Rutland, in bumpers of Bordeaux. It was not for strangers to conjecture that Lord Lovell dared not adventure a more explicit allusion to the name of his new daughter-in-law, lest Arthur should give direct offence by refusing justice to the toast.

Better, however, had he resigned the young gentleman unnoticed to his taciturn sobriety. Excited by the wine thus forced upon him, the disdains of young Lovell rose in offensive laughter to his lips. It had been impossible for any man less drowsy than

the half-imbecile Heneage to mistake the hollowness of the young man's mirth, or the scornfulness of his expressions. It was as clear as day that he saw himself sacrificed to the political necessities of his father!

Young as she was, Anne Lovell became quickly aware that she was despised by the haughty youth beside her; and the consciousness, instead of overpowering her gentle nature, roused in her soul a degree of womanly pride and courage hitherto dormant. She scorned to weep. She was resolved to seem insensible to everything short of outrage. She would not wound her father's feelings by showing him how wildly he had hazarded the happiness of his child; she would not give that boy—that insolent boy—occasion to triumph over her, by proving herself sensitive to his scorn. Her vexations could not be of long continuance. In an hour or two the strangers were to ride forth in the dusk, and leave her anew to her solitude. She had leisure before her for tears. Her fortitude should at least outlast their ill-omened visit.

From the instant the young girl found strength for this noble resolution, she raised her hitherto downcast face—she encountered the defying glances of her young husband—she adventured more than one acute rejoinder to his arrogant remarks. But all this was lost upon Arthur Lovell. His eyes were blinded by the wine that was confusing his brain—

by the indignation that was throbbing in his heart. He beheld, in the lovely young woman by his side, only the hoyden girl at whose expense he had played off his boyish pranks; only the rustic for whose fortune his liberty and person were bartered as a degrading bargain; only the ignoble offspring of a booby country squire, whose veins were furthermore polluted by the blood of a Leicestershire grazier!

Right welcome was it to Anne, when, at the removal of the cloth, the then treasonable toast of "Church and King," gave intimation to Mistress Corbet and herself to curtsey and withdraw; and she discovered that her father's chair instead of being wheeled as usual with them into the adjoining room, was to remain stationary at the convivial board. She felt that she could not, at that moment, have supported the interrogations of her father.

"Do not speak to me," cried she, having wept a few minutes unrestrained on the bosom of her kindly friend; "girl as I am, I see through all this; girl as I am, I feel it as such insults *should* be felt. But do not attempt to console me. I can bear anything this moment but compassion. My wounded pride will bear me up. When they are gone, will I be yours again. At present, dearest friend, do not unnerve my courage."

"You see things in too dark a light, my poor child!" pleaded the prudent Mistress Corbet. "This

young man is apparently of a more wayward, wilful disposition than we knew of. But has my Anne no indulgence for those who are wayward and wilful? Time—absence—the discipline of the world—will bring down that haughty spirit."

"Until he is moved to pardon the presumption of the village wench who has presumed to become his wife!" interrupted the indignant bride. "*Mamma mia!*—I have a spirit too!—I was not prepared for this; but the surprise shall not overmaster my courage!"

And surmounting the tremulous weakness of her frame, Anne Lovell paced the room with impetuous footsteps, sweeping after her the silken robes, and pendent ruffles with which Mistress Corbet had been at such pains to embellish her slender person; till the good woman, as she sat gazing after her, was almost awed to observe that her frame seemed in a moment to have expanded into womanhood, while the energy of her expressions forbad all expectation that her character would ever again relapse into the meekness of a child.

"The evening is gathering fast," cried Anne, stopping short at the bay-window, and suddenly looking out. "It will soon be dusk, they will be gone, and *then* for the bitterness of my despair! O that I should already look forward to its indulgence as a luxury!"

"My dearest girl!" remonstrated Mistress Corbet,

"this excitement is misplaced and unbecoming; you will find among the discourses of the learned Selden——"

"Discourse me no discourses!" interrupted Anne, passing her hand impatiently through the raven tresses which it had cost the good gouvernante so much pains to place in trimly array. "To-morrow, for wisdom and patience—to-night, for resentment and self-respect!"

"Prove it then in a more dignified composure," rejoined Mistress Corbet, affectionately embracing her pupil, and wiping away two tears that stood in relief upon her marble cheeks. "My Lord Lovell explained to you at dinner that his graceless son has insisted upon bearing him company to the army, instead of retiring quietly to complete his studies at Lovell House."

"A resolution to have moved my respect and admiration," cried Anne, "but for the pains with which he caused me to understand that his reluctant consent to the ceremony of the day, was purchased by his father's promise that he should bear arms in the royal cause."

"You mistake, you mistake!" pleaded Mistress Corbet; "the young gentleman did but imply that if esteemed old enough to become a husband, he was old enough to become a soldier; and that, having urged as much upon the good sense of the noble lord his father——"

"No plausible emendations will smooth away the insolence of his declaration on the subject," persisted Anne. "But hark! I hear the tramp of horses! Lord Lovell tarries too long within reach of his enemies. If Lambert's people should obtain intelligence of his being here—!"

"Fear nothing," replied her companion, looking out in her turn; "these are all his lordship's people and led horses. The turret clock is on the stroke of seven."

"For once your eyes are clearer than mine," said Anne, with a faint smile, dashing away the tears by which her own sight had been obscured; and at that moment the door opened, and her father's chair being gently wheeled by Gervas into the chamber, she flew as usual to assist him, almost forgetting for a moment that she was a bride, and in presence of a contemptuous and abhorrent bridegroom. Arthur Lovell, slowly following the old gentlemen into the room, stood aloof, without deigning to address her; and when Mistress Corbet, hoping to accommodate matters, drew near to him with some trivial but conciliatory remark on the state of the weather, he replied by a peevish expression of impatience at his father's delay, Lord Lovell being still engaged in a few parting words with the men of the law.

"His lordship is giving instructions, I conclude, for his will and testament!" observed the insolent boy; "an instrument that may become the more

needful, since, if we loiter another hour at this place, there is every probability of falling in with the advanced guard of the rebel army, when my Lord Lovell may be honoured with heading or hanging, according to the summary process of martial law, as a scout or spy!"

The peace-making woman replied with becoming moderation, while Anne remained still more becomingly silent. Little did either of them suspect the honourable object which detained Lord Lovell at a crisis of such instant danger. Instead of accepting old Heneage's invitation to a stirrup-cup, Lord Lovell hastily drew into the embrasure of a window the confidential notary of his friend.

"You are, I trust and believe, an honest man," said Lord Lovell, with an abruptness which Elias Wright was prevented from resenting by the earnest gravity of his manner. "There is none here but yourself to whom I can confide my counsel, and no time to confide it to yourself in decent and becoming terms. You are the adviser of my worthy friend, the guardian of yonder poor innocent victim; and I would fain constitute you her champion and defender. This morning, sir, you doubtless saw in me a sordid wretch, weighing my son's honour and that maiden's happiness against thirty pieces of silver! You misjudged me. I swear to you, by all that is holiest, had I *then* suspected the temper of Arthur Lovell, I would have gone back penniless to the feet of my un-

fortunate prince, rather than peril the peace of mind of my old friend's daughter. The broils of these disastrous times have estranged me from my home. For years past, I have taken less note than was my duty of the progress of my son's character. I guessed not what revolutions might be effected there by the influence of his mother and her haughty family. It may be that the flames which have been long smothering, do only now burst forth; but, on the truth of a gentleman and a soldier, I no more dreamed of finding a Hotspur in the listless truant of my fireside, than the lovely and sensitive creature I now discern in poor Miles's hoyden daughter. Puzzled, vexed, thwarted throughout the day, I am overpowered at this parting moment by apprehension of the anguish of spirit my rash improvidence may have created. Yonder bags of gold, good Master Wright, become hateful in my eyes, as though they were the price of blood; for, alas! my fears admonish me that they are the forfeit of human happiness."

"Your lordship is over late in the discovery," replied Elias, bluntly. "We have been labouring all night and all day to strengthen with technical legalities a ceremony which already you seem to hold too binding!

"Add not reproaches to my heavy load of cares," cried Lovell, in a tone of deep despondency; "but rather promise that, should I be hurried off among

the thousands who must fall to establish the permanence of King Charles's sovereignty, you will watch over the happiness of our gentle Anne. Her father is on the brink of the grave ; brother, kinsman, friend, defender, hath she none !"

"My grey hairs and peaceful garb, my lord," replied Elias, gravely, "scarcely constitute me an efficient antagonist for one of your son's temper and degree."

"You have prudence, sir,—you have knowledge of the law. Should I fall in the contest which a few days must bring to issue, Heneage, as mortgagee to the full value of the estate of Lovell House, may take possession; and I implore you to impress upon his mind the necessity of devising both that and his own inheritance in trust for the separate use and benefit of his child."

"But since your lordship's son will share the chances of the campaign," observed the notary, "*he* also may become a victim to his loyalty."

"My brother, Sir Richard Lovell, would succeed to my title and entailed estates, interrupted Lovell hastily, having been already twice apprised that his horses and men awaited his pleasure for the bestowal of the charge of money. "Dick is the worthiest and warmest of living souls," added he. "Should my brother survive me, my daughter-in-law will find a friend to aid you in your task ; should he survive me

and my son,—a father. Let me therefore entrust you with a few words, to be delivered to him in case of such a contingency, corroborating the appeal I have now adventured to yourself."

And readily supplied with writing materials by Elias Wright, Lord Lovell indited a few lines, in the course of which his heavy sighs and undisguised emotion avouched the solemnity of their purport. Though unwilling to expose to the matter-of-fact notary the nature of his prognostications, he felt that he was recording the last instructions of a predestined man.

"If bad tidings of our fate should reach you," resumed his lordship, placing the letter unsealed in the hands of the man of business, "*this*, in care and confidence, to Dick Lovell. If *he*, too, should be swept away, it is to yourself only I dare look for the remedy of my fault. Farewell, sir! Sustain our cause with your prayers—sustain this house with your counsels; and, should all prosper, count hereafter upon the gratitude and good faith of the ill-fortuned Lovell!"

Touched by the fervency of this address, old Elias strained the noble hand extended towards him. There was no misdoubting the sincerity of so worthy a heart.

"I crave pardon for intruding to remind your lordship that the night draws on, and that we have a long

ride ere daybreak to get the start of the rebels," cried Arthur Lovell, impatiently, unable longer to cope with the prosy exhortations of his new father-in-law, or the scrutiny of his silent wife.

"'Tis well—'tis well!" cried Lord Lovell, following him to the presence of the family. "We are likely to be in more haste to find ourselves back at Dalesdene than now to cross its hospitable threshold. Arthur, see the sacks deposited in the saddle-bags, and carefully strapped to the cruppers. Master Wright, oblige me by overlooking the transport of this important burthen, which will prove as welcome at head-quarters as a well in the wilderness. My daughter," continued he, approaching Anne, when the bridegroom and the notary had quitted the room, and none were present but the poor deaf invalid and the gouvernante, who was attending to his moans, "forgive me what hath chanced this day—forgive me for having perilled thy future peace! God's blessings be upon thee, my sweet Anne! If I live, thou shalt never need a strong arm and true heart for thy defence!—if I die, Heaven be thy fortress and thy defence! Be brave, be firm, be good——" He impressed a solemn kiss upon her fair brow in lieu of concluding his sentence; for, at that moment of expanded feeling, he found it impossible to add the conclusion he had meditated—"and thou wilt be happy."

Lord Lovell felt conscious that it was to eternal *un*happiness he had consecrated the daughter of his friend!

In a few moments, the tramp of departing steeds disturbed the stillness of evening; and even the usually unobservant squire was of opinion that there was a degree of unnatural formality in the cold salutation deposited by the frozen lips of Arthur Lovell as a farewell token upon the fair hand of his bride.

CHAPTER V.

SUCH were the events slowly and sorrowfully passed in review on the morrow by the gentle bride; and, as the reflections to which they gave rise caused her involuntarily to particularize, hour by hour, the incidents thus rapidly detailed, emotions hitherto strangers to her happy heart were revealed in the varying colours of her cheek, and the rise and fall of her agitated bosom. There needed no monitor to prompt her perceptions or resentments. Nature already spoke audibly to her awakened sensibility.

She had attempted to minister with an unchanged countenance at her father's morning meal; had recited to him his usual form of morning prayer; and, according to daily use, offered her service as reader or amanuensis, previous to betaking herself to her own occupations or recreations for the day. But the old gentleman, purblind as he was, could not but note the unusual paleness of his daughter's face and depres-

sion of her air; and attributing all to the fatigues of the preceding day, bade her hasten to take the air of the garden ere she assumed her station at the desk.

Right glad was the weary maiden to comply. Throughout the night, for the first time in her life, Anne had laid her throbbing head upon a sleepless pillow; and, immediately on rising, was harassed and mortified by the assiduity of her good nurse and the rest of the household in addressing her as "Mistress Lovell." Unskilled to enter into her feelings, they fancied they were paying their court to the girlish bride by this early recognition of her dignities. Having prepared herself to be subjected throughout the day to a series of similar persecutions, it was a relief when, encountering Elias Wright and his cloak-bag, as she departed from her father's presence, the old man, instead of pursuing the pleasantries with which he had assailed her the preceding morning, contented himself with a respectful inquiry after her health, and stood aside to let her pass on to the hall. She fancied this excess of reverence a tribute to her new condition. Alas! on the part of the good old notary it was only a homage to the dignity of misfortune.

She had been less grateful to his forbearance, could she have known that Elias was fresh from a conference with Mistress Corbet; wherein, without saying aught to excite the alarm of the gouvernante, whose sensibility was riper than her judgment, he strenu-

ously advised that the young girl, on whose happiness so rash an experiment had been tried, should not be a moment left alone to commune upon its strangeness.

"Be ever with her—let her mind have constant occupation," was the notary's fatherly counsel. "Her false position may beget careful thoughts if made the subject of solitary reflection."

Yet, on the whole, it was fortunate for young Mistress Lovell that he proffered the advice; for a long-standing jealousy of his influence over the mind of her patron, and occasional interference with the pursuits of his ward, had created a tacit feud between the two privy councillors of Dalesdene; till, unconsciously to herself, whatever was proposed by Elias Wright was duly opposed by Madam Corbet.

"Though they have so wilfully disposed of the fate of my poor child," was the argument of the gouvernante, "let them not thwart her in all beside! My Anne is summoned unto trying fortunes. The foundations of her mind are strong. In much leisure, her opinions and determinations will shape themselves into steadiness of character. What should the old notary know of the heart of woman? Not leave her to herself, quotha? Never suffer her to be alone? Marry, she *shall* be alone—*much* alone! It is time that the child whom they have made a wife should acquire the self-knowledge of a responsible being."

Mistress Lovell being dismissed by her father to the enjoyment of air and exercise, Madam Corbet, in

pursuance of her determination, feigned the necessity for supervising an early reparation of the grand household disorders of the preceding day, as an excuse for not accompanying her charge. In point of etiquette, indeed, she was fully exonerated. At Dalesdene, "a stroll in the garden" was neither more nor less than a parade up and down a raised terrace of gravel, bordered on either side with a coping of pierced freestone, over which might be seen on one side the orchard or fruit garden; and, on the other, the herbary and pleasure ground, where a scanty supply of old-fashioned flowers threw up their luxuriant blossoms amid beds of lavender, basil, marjoram, and rue. Overlooked by the chamber windows of the chaplain and governess, the young lady's movements, though companionless, were under strict surveillance; and here it was that Anne—now pacing the terrace with hurried and unconscious footsteps—now leaning over the balustrade, as if attracted by the fragrance of an autumnal honeysuckle up-climbing from the gardens below—mused upon recent events, and pondered upon misfortunes to come.

So light as her steps had been, when tripping, day after day, along that habitual promenade!—so light as had been her heart, while gazing over the parapet upon that formal array of aromatic bushes, alive with bees, and bright with gaudy insects!—so gay as that featureless and contracted garden had ever before seemed to her, when, escaping from the morning's

tasks, she pruned its gadding rose trees, or snatched a branch of its sweet-scented gale bushes or shapely bays ! And now, all was a wilderness, too narrow for the aspirations of her swelling heart—too uninteresting to subdue the impulses of her mental irritation !

Inclining her aching brow against one of the stone vases ornamenting the parapet, it was difficult not to recall to mind the days when Arthur Lovell, interdicted, at her desire, by Mistress Corbet from disturbing their daily walk, had made it his mischievous delight to lie in wait in the gardens below, and, as the young lady and her preceptress paced along, shower upon them, with well-directed aim, handfuls of flowers or summer berries, for which he was duly reprimanded at dinner-time by his pedagogue ; or those later times when she had found a squirrel chained to the foot of one of the vases, caught by the young truant in the Dalesdene woods, as a gift for his playmate. She recollected how imperiously she had comported herself towards the awkward boy by whom these tokens of regard were ungracefully tendered; and how scrupulously she obeyed the instructions of her preceptress to repel, by the most formal stateliness, the indecorous forwardness of Master Lovell.

Times were altered now !—Tears started anew into her eyes at every fresh occasion of recalling to mind the stern, contemptuous countenance displayed by

her bridegroom. Since she, to whom the marriage was so unacceptable, had controlled *her* movements to a decent show of serenity and submission, what must have been *his* reluctance who was thus unable to repress the indications of his repugnance? He must indeed despise her—must indeed loathe—detest! There was but one comfort in the case—he was gone! They were to meet no more for years—perhaps never to meet again. The state of public affairs forbade all thought of his speedy reappearance at Dalesdene; and, in the interim, she would take such precautions—would make such earnest intercessions to her father, as never again to be exposed to the contumely of him who, by force of parental authority, had been made her husband. Nay, if Arthur Lovell should survive the event of the war (and the rashness of his disposition rendered his chance doubly precarious), they might meet only to concert together the dissolution of their involuntary union.

Such were the reflections of her first day of wedded life! But ere she returned a second time to her allotted promenade, the wounded feelings of the injured girl had subsided to some degree of composure. Instead of allowing herself to anticipate the event of Arthur Lovell's fall in battle as a chance of deliverance to herself, she had begun to reflect that he was the only son of loving parents, the inheritor of many honours, the object of many hopes. If the

law forbad the cancelment of their marriage, they might live apart; or if even that modification of the bond were insufficient to appease the antipathies of her husband—if one of them *must* die to secure the happiness of the other—better herself, who, at the fast-approaching death of her father would be friendless in the world—to none a source of happiness—to her country a profitless burthen!

This softened mood of mind was in some degree attributable to the ill-tidings brought that morning to the Grange by Elias Wright, that the vanguard of the Parliamentary army was sweeping the country with triumphant insolence; that Dalesdene itself would probably be subjected to a domiciliary visit, in consequence of the prevalent report that a troop of strange horsemen had been seen to issue at midnight from the gates; and, worse than all, that Cromwell's forces, both regulars and militia, were gathering in unprecedented strength towards Worcester, where the event of a general action must be fatal to the royal cause!

It was grievous to the good notary to oppress the infirm mind of his client with such black intelligence; but so imminent was the crisis, that it was requisite for the helpless valetudinarian to be prepared for the worst. Mistaking for resignation the apathy with which Mr. Heneage seemed to listen to the recital, he congratulated himself at having found courage to communicate the state of their prospects. It was

only Anne Lovell who had intelligence to perceive that her father's intellects were giving way; that the effects of his paralytic seizure, added to the terrors of the time, had reduced him to a state bordering upon imbecility. He was no longer accountable for his words or actions.

"That I had but been aware of this three days ago!" murmured the poor girl, almost within hearing of the old notary; "never had I suffered my happiness to be disposed of for the gratification of a whim which, with the free use of his judgment, my father had perhaps contemned as earnestly as myself!"

It was on the evening of that very day—an evening memorable to Anne as the eve of her sixteenth birthday—that a letter, in a strange handwriting, and still more strangely addressed, was, with looks of anger and amazement, tendered by old Gervas to her hand.

"To Anne, the daughter of Miles Heneage, Esq., of Dalesdene Grange and elsewhere, these."

A momentary conjecture that the unknown handwriting might be that of Arthur, induced her to cut the string, and tear open the envelope of the despatch, when, to her astonishment, she found the signature to be that of "Letitia Lovell," the date "Lovell House," and the initial line, "Madam, or Mistress, or by whatever name it pleases you at present to be known."

All that the harshest of human natures and the narrowest of human understandings could suggest in the way of invective, followed this insolent apostrophe! Apprised by a letter from her son of the purport for which he had been so hastily summoned to Dalesdene, and the result to which it had conduced of his hasty departure for the army, a mother's anguish on bereavement of her only son took, in passing through the hard heart of Lady Lovell, the distorted shape of her own unamiable character.

A daughter of the proud Earl of Bristol, a staunch bigot and uncompromising aristocrat, Lady Lovell, from the period of the late king's execution, had retired to Lovell House with her child, increasing a thousandfold the difficulties of her husband's career by the audacious publicity of her professions of political faith. For many years following her alliance with Lord Lovell, the influence of her powerful family had seconded the arrogance with which she not only domineered in her household, but presumed to govern the political opinions of her lord. She taught herself to regard her son as almost exclusively *hers;* pledged to the service of the Stuarts as the grandson of Bristol and nephew of Digby, rather than as heir to the house of Lovell. Already she had projected for him an alliance with a fair kinswoman of her own, possessed of an inheritance as considerable as that of Dalesdene, and a pedigree free from the hateful defilements dishonouring the genealogy of

Anne Heneage; so that the letter which brought tidings of the disposal of Arthur's destinies, without reference to her will and pleasure, dealt a blow of mortal disappointment. At first stupefied by the news, she recovered herself only to burst into paroxysms of fury, sad evidence of which was registered in her almost frantic letter to her rejected daughter-in-law.

"But let not the upstart grandchild of a Le'ster grazier," was the concluding paragraph, "presume to hope that her designs upon the hand of the descendant of the houses of Digby and Lovell, will be sanctioned by the laws of the country. For years past have I suspected this base design on the part of his besotted father; and, thanks to my providence, so profound is my son's contempt for the low-born minion to whom he has been compulsorily contracted, that his first measure, on the restoration of peace to this unhappy country, will be to appeal to the House of Lords for the dissolution of a vow forced upon him during his nonage."

Strange to relate, instead of finding herself roused to indignation by the contents of this mad epistle, "the low-born minion" felt easier in her mind from the moment of its perusal. Poor Anne was content to be despised for her humble parentage,—content to be hated at the instigation of an arrogant despot;—for the shame of such pitiful sentiments fell upon their entertainers rather than upon their object. The

bitterness of being personally loathed and contemned thus spared her, she could have found it in her heart to thank the infuriated lady for her explanation of Arthur's proceedings. Having determined to confide the letter neither to her father nor Mistress Corbet (the former of whom would be scarcely able to understand, the latter to endure its drift), old Elias, her trusty guardian, became her only confidant; and finding his opinion coincide with her own, she determined to meet with contemptuous silence the gross insults of the Lady Lovell.

"I scarcely knew this child," was the worthy notary's conning with himself, as he jogged back on his road from Dalesdene to Oakham. "She accepts and parts with a handsome bridegroom as coolly as my client Heneage parted withal, and my new friend Lord Lovell accepted, a sum of six thousand pounds. Yet, ever since that day of blunders, when these foolish old dunderheads laid their sapient heads together to make two young folks miserable, there has sparkled a spirit in her eye, and sat a firmness upon her lip, most impressive and premature. So strange a couple of their years as this boy and girl, never fell under my observation. Of any others I should say, 'A fico for their antipathy!' Let them grumble and make wry faces for a year or so; they will natheless fall into each other's arms at last, as loving as shepherd and shepherdess in some rhymster's ballad! But of these twain I presume not to

predicate. Young Master Lovell is capable of serving fourteen years—*not* to obtain, but to be rid of, his wife; while, as to my ward, I will not even divine to what extremities her resolutions might lead! Lucky, at least, that my Lord Lovell saw through his son's desperation, and was premonished of his lady's prejudices, so as to have left in the hands of the bride's father and trustees so vast a hold over his estate. By that rein may we still bridle the mouth of the restive old jade, and reform the paces of her stubborn colt!"

CHAPTER VI.

"WHAT cheer, good nurse, what cheer?" cried the mourning bride to the venerable Dame Audrey, who came hobbling towards her along the terrace one morning, some ten days after the great event.

"Alack, madam—sad news!" sobbed the old woman, drying her eyes with her apron. "Here is Master Wright ridden over from Oakham, and seeking you far and nigh through the house. All is over, my dear young lady; all is over!"

"What is over?" cried Anne Lovell. "Surely nothing has happened to my father?"

"God forbid! My master, blessings be praised, has just finished a hearty breakfast, and is dozing sweetly in his easy chair!"

"The evil tidings, then, are from the army?" demanded her nursling, turning deadly pale, and leaning on the balustrade for support; seeing which, Dame Audrey lacked courage to communicate the

ill news she had been required by Master Wright to break with becoming caution to her young lady.

"Say on, good nurse!" faltered Anne, perceiving the old woman to hesitate at sight of her emotion. "His majesty the king?"

"Is either slain, or a fugitive before the face of his enemies," replied Audrey. "Worcester hath yielded;—the rebels have obtained a signal victory;—his grace of Hamilton was mortally wounded in the engagement ——" then pausing, she added in a lower voice, "as well as many other worshipful nobles, adherents of the royal cause."

"And among them our good Lord Lovell!" cried Anne, clasping her hands together with a gesture of despair. "I read it in your looks, dear nurse. I have lost—I have lost my friend!" And, with the ready emotion of her tender age, tears flowed rapidly down the pale cheeks of the afflicted girl.

"Master Wright is a-waiting to impart all this and more to you, dearest lady," added the old woman, extending her faithful arm to support her darling child.

"There *is* more, then, to be told?" faltered Anne, hastening her agitated steps as she approached the house, yet not trusting her lips to breathe the name of Arthur, least a fatal reply should convey the worst tidings; while on the threshold of the hall-door stood the old notary, his overclouded countenance black as his inky cloak, seeming to reveal in silence the news she dreaded to hear.

Raising her pale and tearful face inquiringly towards him, she hoped to be spared the necessity for an explicit question; but so shocked was the good man on perceiving the effect produced by Audrey's intelligence, that he contented himself with extending his arms to receive her, lest she should fall to the ground. Bearing her across the hall into the nearest chamber, Dame Audrey hastened to revive her with volatiles and burnt feathers.

"I see how it is!" faltered Anne, turning after a few minutes' painful silence towards the old man, who still supported her on her seat. "I am a widow, and you fear to tell me so;—a child, and yet a widow;—too soon a wife—too soon a widow!"

And her anguish burst into a fit of hysterical laughter, which froze the very blood of the old notary.

"I beseech your ladyship to take patience,—your ladyship hath no just cause for this disturbance!" cried he, not forgetting amid his perplexity to mark his sense of his ward's accession of rank.

"Have you tidings, then, of Arthur Lovell? Can you assure me that Arthur Lovell yet lives?" said she, in a firmer voice, when, at length, the restoratives of Dame Audrey produced comparative composure.

"I can attest that there is not so much as a rumour of my young Lord Lovell's mischance!" replied Wright. "At present, madam, our news is of the

vaguest. All we know for certain is, that the lord-general fell upon the city of Worcester with an army of thirty thousand men; that the king's troops, amounting scarcely to fourteen thousand, speedily gave way. But it was in defending the passage of the Teme, previous to the general action, that my Lord Lovell received his mortal wound, and expired upon the field."

"His son was with him at his death?" demanded Anne, in a low voice.

"It may be so presumed. But my tidings (being only such as have reached the town-council of Oakham) bear no such import. Touching the young lord, 't is rumoured only that he accompanied the king, when, having vainly attempted to rally the courage of the discountenanced Scottish troops, in a spot named Friar Street, of the city of Worcester, his Majesty implored them to put an end to his life, that he might not survive to witness the fall of his cause. Upon this emergency, my young Lord Lovell seized the bridle of his charger, and compelled his Majesty from the spot, the troops of Cromwell having already carried the opposite gate of the city, for some time stoutly defended by Colonel Careless."

"And whither has our unfortunate prince betaken himself?" demanded Anne, not choosing to hazard a more intimate inquiry.

"The Almighty, his best protector, only knows!"

ejaculated Elias Wright, in a disconsolate tone. "An hour or so before the Castle Hill was surrendered by Colonel Drummond (a measure which proved the signal for a cessation of resistance), the king, guarded by a detachment of Scottish cavalry, issued from St. Martin's Gate, and took the northern road. It was six of the clock, and dusk; and the escort, it is supposed, quickly dispersed, leaving his Majesty to pursue his flight encumbered only with a select band of followers."

"We are now on the seventh of the month," said Lady Lovell, musingly; "yet, though these events chanced upon the third, no news is known of the king!"

"A heavy price will be set by parliament upon his person," observed the notary. "God give him a safe deliverance from those who desire no better than to send him after his royal father!"

"Their sole chance is to reach the coast, or I should say that it was probable he might direct his steps hitherward," observed Anne, musingly; "here, at least, he knows himself to be secure from betrayal?"

"Mr. Heneage is then in more direct communication with the king than I am apprised of?" demanded the astonished Wright.

"I spoke of my Lord Lovell," resumed his companion, timidly. "Better, however, that the fugitives made for the nearest port! The banner of the king

is irrecoverably fallen! There is no safety for either him or his on English ground!"

"Such is, alas! the general judgment," replied the notary; "Cromwell, in his advice to the parliament of this signal victory, entitles it the 'crowning mercy of his mission.' Even in our poor town of Oakham, where loyalty hath hitherto preponderated, I discovered this morning a decided manifestation in favour of the triumphant lord-general. 'There is no longer a king in Israel,' cry the populace; 'Charles hath deserted the people; let us seek wiser rulers for the nation, that they may govern it.' It is vain to conjecture what further evil may betide!"

"The faction which hath slaughtered one sovereign and driven another forth to exile, will now usurp all," observed Lady Lovell. "Heaven send that it may leave us peaceful graves! I doubt 't is the best portion that will be granted to well-thinking subjects."

"Nay, nay; scarcely yet so desponding, my dear young lady," cried Wright. "Dalesdene may long afford a secure refuge. Men of peace, like Master Heneage, who have taken no active part in this unhappy struggle, who have opposed no tax or exaction of the established government, may reasonably hope to sit under the shelter of their own vine in safety. Your father's infirmities secure *him* from all claim or necessity of action. My own insignificance and scrupulous forbearance from political broils ensure my impunity; and the best aid and dutiful service of old

Elias Wright are at the disposal of my honoured Lady Lovell, the ward confided to my guardianship by her good old grandsire. His arm may not be so strong, nor his name so noble, as those of others who ought to be at hand for her protection; but all I can do, my dear child, for your aid, comfort, or honour, shall be done as zealously as though you were a lamb of my own fold."

A tear gathered on the old man's cheek as he spoke, and it was curious to note the struggle, in his mode of addressing his lovely companion, between respect for her newly-acquired rank as a peeress of the realm, and his habitual affection for one whom he had seen grow up from infancy to the verge of womanhood. Lady Lovell, however, heard only in his address the comfortable assurance of his fatherly care and protection.

"Thankfully do I accept your friendly offers," she replied. "My poor father, as you must perceive, is incapable of thought or action. Judge for us both; —proceed for us both. All that ought to be done for our safety, for our credit, I look to your wisdom to provide for. Our funds are already in your hands. Were there any hope of obtaining a sure agent to seek out Lord Lovell, and convey to him the succours necessary to his present emergency, I should say, be such our first consideration. But interference might occasion further peril both to him and to the king, by directing attention to their retreat. All, therefore, I

recommend to your care is to despatch a discreet and confidential person to Worcestershire, with means of bestowing becoming burial upon the remains of my father's noble friend."

"Were I to presume to advise, my dear young lady," interposed Master Wright, "I should say that the interests of the living claim precedence over the pomps of the grave. Let the dead bury their dead! The body of my late Lord Lovell is probably long ere this deposited in Christian ground; and were there any pretext in these troublesome times for bestowing more ostentatious obsequies, surely it is the business of his widow to provide for the ceremony, rather than a friend."

"Lord Lovell's only son is perforce a fugitive," replied Anne, with dignity, "and I, his lawful wife, at present represent him, and am called upon to act in his behalf. If I know aught of the haughty woman whose letter of last week displayed so hard and selfish a spirit, *her* care will be to maintain her rights and privileges at Lovell House, rather than to show respect to the memory of her departed lord."

"I' faith, her ladyship's task will be far from laborious," cried the lawyer, betraying, as far as became the sobriety of the moment, his professional glee at having overreached an adversary. "The dowager hath no more share or portion in the interests of Lovell House or its dependencies than the poorest of my clerks! Her ladyship's dower is

levied upon the entailed estates in Shropshire, of which, during her son's nonage, she may pretend to the administration. But the whole demesne of Lovell is made over in fee to my worshipful client, your ladyship's good father, with power to his son to redeem the same on the attainment of his majority. Let her but so much as lay her finger on a blade of grass, dating from the third day of this current month, and she will hear news of the attorney-at-law of Miles Heneage, Esquire, of Dalesdene Grange."

"You mean no offence, I trust, to Lord Lovell's widow?" gravely demanded his ward.

"None, madam, so long as we receive none at her hands. It is simply my interest to serve in due time upon her ladyship a process of ejection, for the better understanding and establishment of her claims and our own."

"Eject her from her husband's doors?" cried the startled Anne. "You surely do not dream of such an outrage?"

"We will discourse of it another time, my dear young lady," observed Elias. "Your feelings are now excited,—your judgment scarcely at your disposal. There will be a time to consider it more patiently hereafter."

"No—*now!*" replied Lady Lovell, with decision and composure. "Untoward business rarely gathers grace from procrastination. I am prepared to dis-

cuss with you, henceforth and from this moment, all matters in which my co-operation may be needful."

"Without troubling you, then, with formal terms of law," observed the notary, "know, madam, that, in consideration of a sum of eight thousand pounds to your personalty appertaining (whereof six were delivered to his hand when he quitted this house on the 29th of August), my Lord Lovell did recently make over in trust to your ladyship's father all his estates and messuages situated in the shire of Northampton."

"Well, sir? The moneys were forthwith assigned by the late noble friend of my father to the use and profit of his sovereign," replied Anne, fancying that the attorney was about to suggest an inquiry into the appropriation of a sum which might be supposed available to the claims of his heirs.

"With his lordship's employment of the moneys, madam, we have at present small concern," said the attorney. "It is the estate which falls into our hands that importeth us to consider."

"At present," replied his ward, "refrain from all proceedings in the matter. My father is incapable of interference. I have surely no need of the proceeds. Let Lady Lovell enjoy, so long as she listeth, the lands pledged by the generous loyalty of her husband."

"Under your favour, madam, this disinterestedness mars at once the Lady Lovell's cause and your own,"

remonstrated the cautious Elias. "Her late lord fell in arms against the established government. His lands will doubtless be subjected to sequestration; nay, if the prognostications of the longest heads are to be trusted, every acre belonging to the royalist generals will be forfeited by parliament to the Commonwealth to defray the costs of this disastrous war. As the property of the deceased nobleman, Lovell House would consequently be lost to his heirs. As the property of the inoffensive Miles Heneage, against whom no overt act of resistance to the ruling powers can be charged, it is secure from spoliation. How say ye, then? Shall the inheritance of your father's noble friend be preserved by this stratagem intact till better times; or shall it become a hunting-ground for the foxes of the commonweal?"

"Secure it as best you may, for the future benefit of his son," replied Anne, after a moment's consideration. "Should *he* too become a victim to the good cause, God send us a happier time to restore it to the enjoyment of his mother!"

It was not for Master Wright to combat what he regarded as the romantic generosity of girlhood. Time would be the best monitor of the young Lady Lovell. The old man took his respectful leave of his ward, that no time might be lost in the ordering of his legal measures for her advantage.

It needed the lapse of more than an hour after his departure to relieve the mind of his young client

from the exhaustion into which it subsided after such trying exertions. Dame Audrey peeped unheeded into the chamber, and Mistress Corbet approached unperceived towards the chair in which her pupil reclined. But in a few affectionate words she entreated the forbearance of both; and, on the expiration of her allotted period of silent meditation, Lady Lovell issued from the room, composed in deportment, if not tranquillized in spirit.

She had resolved to make no disclosures to her father. Of what use to inflict pain upon the infirm mind which had lost all power but that of suffering? Having bent her steps towards Mr. Heneage's apartment, she assumed her usual place beside his chair, took up her customary work, and waited patiently till he should indulge in some of the vague, childish questions which, at rare intervals, constituted his attempts at conversation.

CHAPTER VII.

So glowing was the atmosphere of that fierce September day, that even the poor paralytic man, whose existence was scarcely more than a prolonged lethargy, could endure to have the casements thrown open; and as his ghastly cheek rested against the scarcely whiter cushions of his easy chair, the spicy scent of the lavender and rosemary hedges came wafting into the room, till a vacant smile overspread his wasted features on recognition of their recollected fragrance. Vaguely conscious of some agreeable sensation, the imbecile man sat passing his fingers through the button-holes of his vest, as he inhaled the musky breeze and gazed upon the graceful form of his daughter.

But while in *his* mind all was a blank, in *hers* all was emotion and activity. For she did but *seem* to work. Inclining her head over the seam she was sewing, the tears kept dropping fast over her hands,

while the foldings of her dress vibrated with the quickened respiration of her bosom. Lady Lovell's thoughts were far away. The struggle of the battle lay before her. She seemed to look upon the dying moments of that noble being who, ten days before, had tendered her, in that very chamber, his fatherly protection, and who was now trampled into the gory clay of a dishonoured field!

Yet even *his* was not the plight that moved her tenderest compassion. *He*, at least, was at rest. "Nothing could touch him further." The troubles of his afflicted country,—the injuries of his young king,—would never again disturb the tranquillity of his impenetrable sleep. Her pity was more deeply moved towards the fugitive prince and his followers —the hunted of the law—the proscribed—on whose heads a price was set, that, like the first murderer, whatsoever man should find them, it was lawful to kill and slay!

Oh! how little (when for a moment, as she sat beside her newly-wedded husband at the wedding-feast, she had prayed within her soul that the cruelty with which he was entreating her might be revenged upon his head)—how little had she imagined that the pride of Arthur was about to be so quickly levelled with the dust!—that he would be thus speedily exposed to ignominy—persecution—danger—despair! Though nothing had transpired of his deportment in the fatal field, she felt assured, as if instructed

by an eye-witness, that he had done honour to his name. That he had been at hand to watch over the safety of his sovereign, was attested by the information obtained by Elias Wright. But, alas! what availed the deeds of that disastrous day? What chance was there even of escape for Charles and his handful of followers? Already, perhaps, they had been sacrificed by some obscure hand. At any hour, at any moment, the news might reach her that she was a widow. "I could wish," mused Anne Lovell, through her tears, "that we had parted in charity! Would I had found courage to acquaint him, ere he quitted the house, that the marriage was as little of my desiring as his own—that I had no mind to thwart him by persisting in the alliance—that I was content to aid its dissolution, and renounce all claim upon his hand! He might then, perhaps, have quitted me without bitterness—have bid me adieu as a friend—as an old playmate; perhaps have asked my good wishes for him during his absence—my prayers for his safety in the day of battle!"

And, in spite of her efforts, her work dropped upon her knee at the thought, and, covering her face with her hands, she wept long and unrestrainedly.

The old man looked wistfully on her proceedings. He had a vague surmise that something was amiss. But while his daughter still wept unquestioned, a loud clanging was heard at the door-bell, a tramping of many horses in the court-yard; and, before Lady

Lovell had time to inquire into the cause of disturbance, she was startled by a wrangling at her father's very chamber-door, when she distinguished the voice of Gervas, striving to interdict the entrance of a stranger. For a single hasty moment, she fancied that peradventure the fugitive king and his followers might be seeking refuge at Dalesdene; but the entrance of a portly old gentleman in a buff coat, and steel cap sitting most incongruously upon his rubicund face, destroyed the illusion.

"This obstinate major-domo of yours, Mistress Anne," said the intruder, trundling his rotund person towards Lady Lovell, with an attempt at obeisance at every alternate step, "hath the ill grace to oppose the authority of the laws of the realm, represented unworthily in the person of your humble servant."

"The state of my father's health being such as to prevent our receiving guests at Dalesdene, must be Gervas's excuse, sir, for any seeming want of courtesy," replied the young lady, reddening with terror at the sudden inbreak; for though the worshipful Hosea Shum, town-major of the borough of Oakham, was a neighbour with whom the timid squire had scrupulously maintained terms of amity, yet his present warlike array, and the escort of men-at-arms whose steps were distinctly heard in the corridor, forbade all hope that his visit on the present occasion was one of mere civility.

"The name of guests, young lady, is a title which

squareth not with my present mission," replied the pursy major, striving to impart to his nasal twang, broken by the palpitations incident upon his exertions, the dignified tone of a man in office. "Upon the warrant of the worshipful town-council of the town of Oakham, have I made ingress into this mansion, with authority to examine and search for concealed arms or other implements of war."

"God forbid that any member of my father's household should oppose your investigations, sir," replied Lady Lovell, somewhat reassured. "You must be well aware, Major Shum, that the poor armoury of the Grange, insignificant as it is, was put under requisition two years since by the magistrates of your town-council; since which time (as you will find on examination) it has been used by our housekeeper for drying flax, or some household purpose."

"That remains to be seen, Mistress Anne that remains to be seen!" replied the major, who, having unbuckled his cap in deference to the young lady's presence, was deliberately wiping his streaming brows.

"Permit me, then, to lead the way thither," replied Lady Lovell, apprehensive that so strange an intrusion might seriously agitate the frame of her father. But on glancing towards Mr. Heneage, in explanation of her impatience of the presence of the town-major, it was clear, from the almost idiotic smile playing over the old man's features, that his

eyes, like those of an infant, were dazzled and gratified by the glittering accoutrements of the individual whose person he was not sufficiently himself to recognize at that moment.

"It were, as I conjecture, useless," resumed Hosea, "to expound unto the good gentleman, your parent, the extent of my commission regarding him. For verily I do perceive that the account rendered by my kinsman Wright to the town-council, of his client's bodily condition, is a true saying; and that Mister Heneage is, at this present speaking, incapable, by reason of defect of mind and body, of the malefactions against the government of the realm imputed to him by certain denunciators."

"Malefactions?" interrupted Lady Lovell, with a look of amazement.

"It hath been deposed by credible witnesses to the magistrates of Oakham, of whom I am the unworthy coadjutor," resumed the pompous Hosea, "that on a certain night of the past month a troop of armed horsemen did issue at dead of night out of the gates of the demesne of Dalesdene; being, as it is surmised, no other than succours making towards the quarters of the malignant Charles Stuart,—now, by the grace of the Lord, a fugitive before the face of this people."

"We will talk of this on our way to the armoury, or whatever portion of the house you may see fit to visit," said Anne, changing colour, in the apprehen-

sion that some casual word might reach the ear and rouse the dormant intelligence of her father, so as to induce an imprudent rejoinder. Leading the way, therefore, out of the chamber, she observed, as she accompanied the hobbling hero along the corridor, "Even were this deposition just, I need not suggest to the wisdom of Major Shum that my father's lands might afford traverse for a squadron of horse, more especially under cover of the night, without so much as the knowledge of a person so infirm as the unfortunate gentleman whose miserable condition has just now been perforce exhibited to your notice."

"The very observation I had myself the satisfaction of making to my honourable colleagues!" retorted the major. "Miles Heneage, of Dalesdene Grange," said I, to the assembled council, "is an individual of peaceful habits and demeanour, ungiven to broils or plots; a just man,—a payer of dues to the state,—a submissive son of the church; ergo, it is most unlikely that he would thrust his old age into the perils of a cause now, by the blessing of Providence, levelled with the earth, when his cautious youth refrained evermore from political demonstrations."

"I pray you let the key of this chamber be sought for of Dame Audrey," said Lady Lovell, turning towards old Gervas, as they reached the door of the armoury.

And as the old man departed, grumbling at being

compelled to leave his young lady unattended in company of the major and his sour-visaged troop, Hosea Shum added, in a lower voice, as if not caring to be overheard by his men, "Verily, there was another count in the charge against my worthy neighbour, Miles Heneage; *videlicet*, that, within four days of the battle of Worcester (for the event of which, render we evermore thanks to the Lord!), he entertained under his roof, with honour and feasting, the malignant Arthur, commonly called Lord Lovell; a stumbling-block whom it hath pleased Heaven to remove, by the strong arm of his saints, out of the way of his people."

"And if it *were* so," cried the young lady, recovering her presence of mind, "my father is, as you see, in no condition to play the host. Lord Lovell was deeply my father's debtor for moneys lent and other obligations; and Mister Elias Wright, your kinsman, may have seen fit, amid the hazards of the times, to bring him personally to account with his creditor. On such an occasion, Major Shum, I, a weak and inexperienced representative of my infirm parent, was scarcely likely to deny the hospitality of a meal to a gentleman of estate, of whatever party, a sojourner within our gates for purposes wholly unconnected with parties or politics."

"It was even in this light, Miss Anne, that I had the satisfaction of placing the transaction before the eyes of my worshipful colleagues," rejoined Hosea,

admonished, by this allusion to his kinsman's name, of Elias Wright's involvement in the affair. "But what have we here?" cried he, as, the door of the dismantled armoury being thrown open, a long table piled with a service of antique plate was discovered within.

"There hath been no leisure to replace the silver in its appropriate chests since the night of the banquet," observed old Gervas, in an audible whisper to his young mistress, whose countenance evinced surprise and displeasure at the display. "My good master's seizure followed so closely upon the visit of my Lord Lovell——"

A sign from the embarrassed Anne put a period to the old man's garrulity; while Hosea and his companions, though the denuded state of the chamber afforded no pretext for the extension of their investigations, paraded leisurely round the tables, examining with covetous glances the embossed flagons and platters recently burnished up to grace the ill-omened wedding-banquet of the heiress of Dalesdene.

"A sore sight to the eyes, and a reproach to the soul of the faithful, this disgraceful wastery of gear!" ejaculated a grim-visaged gentleman, the lieutenant of the troop, apostrophizing Major Hosea Shum. "Wherefore, while the saints of the Lord lack meat and suffer hunger, and the soldiers of the commonweal need raiment, should these vessels of silver and vessels of gold lie tarnishing in bootless amassment?"

"As much might be urged, good Master Gather-

grace, against thine own apportionment of fertile territory to the raising of unprofitable tulips and other painted weeds, wherein corn could be sown, and grown, and reaped, for profit of the troops of the lord-general," replied Hosea, drily. "But even as it is writ, 'Remove not thy neighbour's landmark,' it is also commanded, 'Covet not thy neighbour's goods.' Wherefore, instead of wasting our minutes in admiration of these gaudy vanities, it were fitting that we pursued our search for arms into the cellars and outhouses, according to the ordering of our instructions."

Thus twitted by the centurion in authority over him, the abashed lieutenant followed the guidance of his major; and the whole company were now recommended to the care and guidance of old Gervas by Lady Lovell, who hastened to give orders for their entertainment, and to take precautions that no further token of their intrusion might disturb the tranquillity of the invalid.

It was not the first time that the intelligent daughter of Mr. Heneage had noticed how much her family stood indebted for its civic impunity to the protection of Master Elias Wright. In other instances, as well as this, the mouse had contrived to secure the safety of the lion. Of humble origin and avocation, Master Wright boasted extensive connections among the burgesses of Oakham, and was so far a dutiful adherent to the existing government

that he was never known to raise his hand or voice in favour of any other. "Whatsoever king might reign," he was a loyal subject; not that he might remain "Vicar of Bray," for neither office nor profit did he hold at the hands of government; but because a quiet life was his desire, and he knew that while his submission or recusancy was too unimportant to be profitable to either cause or faction, his intermeddling with politics might open the vial of wrath upon the heads of his peaceful household. No child remained to himself and his good woman (the pious sister of Major Hosea Shum); but they had adopted the orphan offspring of their only son; and Hope and Rachel Wright were too tender of years and fair of person not to make their welfare a thoughtful charge to their kind-hearted old grandsire. He became more cautious than ever, on the reflection that were mischance to befall him, no protector would be forthcoming for the two friendless girls.

Till the accidental alliance of his old friend farmer Hovenden's daughter with the great man of the neighbourhood, the esquire of Dalesdene Grange, had brought him into contact with a gentleman of high estate, an hereditary upholder of the abuses of government, Elias Wright's convictions and prejudices naturally inclined him towards the daily increasing body of the disaffected. But though personally and professionally disgusted by the lawless innovations of the late misjudging monarch, Elias

was too reasonable to include an inoffensive valetudinarian, such as his client at Dalesdene, in his enmities towards the mal-advisers of the unfortunate Charles; and he consequently made it his business to stand, when occasion warranted, betwixt the timid country gentleman and the blustering magistrates in authority in the neighbourhood; suggesting to the former such little sacrifices as might preserve his household unmolested, and to the latter the utter harmlessness of the squire.

"The poor gentleman complies cheerfully with all prescribed forms," argued the attorney with Major Hosea and his colleagues. "Nature never cut him out for patriot or hero. Leave him to dwindle away his inoffensive days in quiet; and whenever necessity presents itself to increase the fine upon his lands, or otherwise lay him under contribution, let the demand be made through myself. So shall *your* trouble and *his* vexation be alike diminished."

To old Heneage his advice was of an equally pacific tendency; and whereas the infirmitics of the father and the tender years of the daughter forbade all exercise of hospitality at the Grange, many were the sides of venison despatched in Heneage's name to the corporation of Oakham, and many the baskets of game and choice fruit from Dalesdene, which tickled the palate of the rotund Hosea Shum, as peace-offerings from the dormant cavalier.

But old Elias had lately overstepped, or suffered

his client to overstep, the modesty of his former prudence. That hasty alliance with Lord Lovell, propounded for the first time to the wary guardian at the witching time of night, and without a minute's space allowed for deliberation, had been sanctioned in an incautious moment, as affording to the grandchild of his earliest friend, and the daughter of his most liberal client, an establishment in life beyond his hopes or her pretensions. Lord Lovell was a gentleman of unblemished honour and reputation, free from all blame in the misadventures of the late king, and all suspicion of interested motives in his devotion to the present. He had even forsaken his home, family, and peaceful vocation, to attach himself to the person of a throneless and wandering prince; and there was something in the noble frankness of his address which, on occasion of former visits to the Grange, had engaged the regard of the old notary, and which now, in his lordship's need and despair, appealed forcibly to his sympathy. Elias had not, in short, felt himself justified in opposing a match so gratifying to the feelings of Mister Heneage; nor was it till four-and-twenty hours had elapsed after the flurry of the event that he sobered down into perfect consciousness of the unauthorized indiscretion of his proceedings.

All that remained to be done in extenuation of his fault, was to confine himself in kinsmanly counsel to his brother-in-law Hosea; imploring that, should

any hint or denunciation reach the corporation of Oakham, he would take upon himself, as far as possible, the investigation of the matter, so as to watch over the safety of Heneage and his daughter, for whom the fat major's organs of digestion entertained almost as deep-seated a regard as the grateful soul of Elias Wright.

Such was the cause which had determined Hosea to suggest, as of his own absolute wisdom, a domiciliary visit to the Grange, purporting to anticipate and defeat the measures likely to arise from the rumours afloat concerning the mysterious entertainment of the squire; a visit which seemed to end to the satisfaction of all parties; for so absorbed was the portly major in the discussion of a venison pasty, washed down, at old Gervas's suggestion, with copious draughts of Rhenish, that he noted not when his fair young hostess rose abruptly from table and quitted the room, leaving the honours to be done by Mistress Corbet to himself and his comrades.

Still less did he conjecture that her sudden emotion was caused by the recollection that the last time she had presided at that board, Arthur Lovell was seated by her side; while the chair occupied by Hosea Shum was filled by their good and noble father! Where—where were they now? Lord Lovell in an unhallowed grave! Arthur—but, no! she dared not even surmise the destinies of Arthur!

CHAPTER VIII.

It were a painful and thriftless task to describe the hours of suspense and anxiety endured during the ensuing month by the patient daughter of Miles Heneage. Relieved by the favourable issue of Hosea's visitation from all uneasiness on her father's account, every day brought harassing tidings as regarded the fate of him with whose her own was irrevocably united. During the seclusion of King Charles at Boscobel, and his wanderings on the coast of Dorset, endless rumours of discovery and mischance were spread, with a view of provoking the indiscretion of those really cognizant of his retreat; and the anxious girl, believing young Lovell to be the companion of the fugitive prince, was now distracted with intelligence that Charles and his companions were lodged in the Tower of London, thence to be transported, without trial, to the common gibbet; now, with news that Charles Stuart, having

hired a fishing-smack on the coast of Devon, had gone down in a storm at sea, with fifteen of his youthful followers.

Her ear was ever on the watch for the slightest whisper involving the name of the king,—her eye directed in eager interrogation to the countenance of every creature that approached her. Her food remained untasted, and her pillow sleepless, till her fair round cheek, hitherto tinged with the bloom of youth and health, grew pale, and wan, and wasted. It was in vain that old Elias remonstrated, or Mistress Corbet reproved. It was in vain they assured her that her unconcealed grief, attributed by all who were not in her secret to zeal for the royal cause, might involve her father and herself in irrevocable ruin.

"All will have a right to conclude," observed the venerable notary, "that the grief of Miss Heneage is for the malignant Charles Stuart, seeing that none are privileged to attribute your ladyship's tears to the danger incurred by your wedded lord."

"Yet what more natural cause for grief," pleaded the sorrowing girl, "than the loss of my father's dearest and earliest friend?"

"It is more natural, at least," retorted Elias, "than sympathy in the fate of a young gentleman an all but stranger, and, in the little known of him, a *worse* than stranger,—an insolent and scornful ingrate!"

But Lady Lovell, detecting his drift, was not to be taunted out of her imprudent self-betrayal. Her nature was too candid to admit of the assumption of indifference when her soul was tortured with anguish.

Disappointed in his hopes of stimulating her pride, the notary next attempted to divert her attention by details of his measures of worldly thrift. He chose her little ladyship to listen while he narrated the injurious treatment he had received at the hands of the Dowager Lady Lovell, on serving upon her the necessary process of ejectment. The haughty woman having insisted that, as *locum tenens* for her son, she had a right to retain possession, Elias Wright had been compelled to prove to her, per exhibition of the warranty of the law, that her son himself had no longer a claim upon the property; and backed by the authority of the local magistracy, —which a judicious distribution of royalist gold speedily secured to a citizen of the Commonweal possessing influence in parliament, and kinsmen high of account in borough corporations,—he at length succeeded in persuading the haughty woman that the widow of a rebel lord could not do better than retreat decently to her Shropshire estates, lest, drawing down upon herself the interposition of the law, she should be condemned to penalties securing the ruin of herself and son. Sir Richard Lovell, the only brother of her late husband, was already in prison,

awaiting his trial among those taken in arms for the royal cause; and Elias Wright mildly suggested to the infuriated dowager, that instead of wasting her time and breath in execrations that recoiled only upon the head of her who uttered them, she would do well to prepare herself for the amercements with which the backslidings of the Lovell family were likely to be visited by government.

"The widow, then, has been already driven forth from beneath her husband's roof?" demanded Anne, with an air of undissembled indignation.

"The Lady Lovell, madam, is installed under her late husband's roof, Duke's Court, the Shropshire seat of the Lovells;—Lovell House being, as I have already suggested, the absolute property of your ladyship's father."

"How know ye that she hath chosen to retire thither?" persisted Anne; "she may be, at this moment, homeless and friendless as her son!"

"Nay, madam, for your satisfaction's sake, I have made it my duty to inquire. The dowager is in actual possession of her dower-house, and lacketh no means of decent entertainment. The agent of the late lamented peer is my trusty aforetime yoke-fellow of the law, Master Polhill, of Thrapstone, with whom, by conference and adjustment, I have come to a good understanding touching the real object of our investiture; he, in the interest of the young lord, admitting our tenure in fee to be the

only mode of securing the property for his future benefit."

"A benefit which it may be even now he surviveth not to enjoy!" murmured Anne with a despairing countenance; "in which contingency I shall, upon attainment of control over my worldly estate, make over to his mother my portion in Lovell House."

"I thank Heaven, sweet lady, that mine and your good father's providence will evermore prevent so wanton a sacrifice," cried the notary. "The estate must remain in trust for your benefit and the benefit of such children as may be hereafter born to you. And should mischance befall the young lord your husband, his unfortunate uncle, Sir Richard Lovell, who succeeds to his title and estates, were the only person justified in disputing your possession."

"He would find me no tenacious antagonist," replied the young Lady Lovell with a sigh. "Meanwhile let all possible heed and care be taken of the mansion and estate which it appears I hold in pledge."

"Fear not that they will be looked to," replied the notary. "In your good father's name and behalf, I have retained all the ancient servitors of the place; appointing over them in chief a pious kinsman of my own, Enoch, the son of Hosea Shum (a Templar, learned in the law, and of fair repute with our men in authority), as respondent to all claims and inquiries touching our right of appropriation."

"Let me be no further troubled, then, concerning a tenure in which I am not suffered to act according to my own good pleasure," replied Anne. "I have anxieties enough, God wot, without taking such ready thought of the things of this world."

Accepting this remark as a token of dismissal, the old man took his leave; while his youthful ward returned to her dreary task of filial duty,—dreary because the worse than solitude to which it consigned her was saddened with cheerless thoughts and thronging fears. It was not till towards evening, when, after her father's slender meal, he was apt to sink into slumber, enabling the faithful Gervas to supply her place, that she stole out for refreshment into the garden, to pace that monotonous gravel terrace, scarcely less disheartening than the chamber of sickness. Yet it *was* a relief. *There* she could give free course to her tears. *There* it was tacitly understood between herself and Mistress Corbet that her movements were to be free. *There* none was to molest her with consolations. She might be all in all to her musing—all in all to her grief!

Yet, as she was bending her pensive steps towards an arbour of lilacs and Gueldres roses which sheltered the wall at the furthest extremity of the terrace, a hand was suddenly laid upon her arm; and pausing with a start, the maiden drew up almost with hauteur on perceiving that her meditations were again interrupted by Master Wright. She did not care that the

old man should detect, in her disordered countenance and streaming eyes, manifestations of an affliction of which she had striven to make light.

"Methought, sir, I had given orders that I was to be unmolested?" said she, with unwonted harshness.

"I received them, my dear young lady—I received them!" replied the good old man; "but the occasion justifies my disregard. I have happy news for you!"

"For *me?*" demanded Anne, blushing for her previous ungraciousness.

"The king's majesty is in safety in the kingdom of his maternal ancestors. On the twentieth day of the month, Charles Stuart landed at Fécamp in Normandy, after privations and escapes which render his preservation little short of miraculous."

"Heaven's mercy be praised!" faltered Anne, penetrated with joy.

"From the field of Worcester, as it appears, his Majesty proceeded into hiding at a lone mansion belonging to the Giffard family, on the borders of Staffordshire—alone, and at the absolute mercy of certain peasants to whose loyalty he intrusted himself."

"*Alone!*" reiterated Anne, in unconcealed dismay. "His faithful followers, then, are still at the mercy of the murderous Roundheads?"

Old Elias shrugged his shoulders. He was de-

sirous, perhaps, of retaliating on the young lady's recent perversity, or of probing the secrets of that guileless heart.

"My Lord Lovell is still missing?" persisted Anne, scarcely able to support herself; "or tidings may have already reached you that death has removed him from the hands of his enemies?"

"I should scarcely presume, madam, to style *that* happy news," he replied; "howbeit, your ladyship's interests in life might be advantaged by such an issue. But, on the contrary, my young lord's safety is as assured as that of his royal master. Compelled by his Majesty's change of route to miss a rendezvous they had appointed together in London, Lord Lovell sailed from the river in a Scheveling schooner, and is now in safety at the Hague. Ten days ago, his lordship's escape transpired in the city; but, as a matter of less general interest, the news reached not Oakham till this morning by the same express, advising the town-council that all further vigilance of search for the person of the fugitive king might be dispensed with."

Old Elias was surprised that no word of exultation broke from the lips of the young wife, and scarcely less so when, after a minute's pause, she suddenly placed her arm within his, as if craving his support towards the house. Before they reached the threshold, however, she had recovered herself; and, willing to mislead his observation as regarded

her unavowed weakness, was no sooner at the home-end of the terrace, than she proposed prolonging her walk by a turn or two. Not another allusion, however, to the escape of either the king or his adherents! She began in a hurried voice to talk of business; to explain that, her father's mind being now irrecoverably gone, she desired daily interviews with her good friend and guardian Master Wright, to consult for the better ordering of their affairs; till at last, as the evening shades fell darker on her cheek, she adventured on the exposition of the real object of her promenade; begging him to cause it to be written and fairly engrossed by his clerks, on what grounds the estates of Lovell had been seized in her father's name.

"I would have it made your earliest business, my good sir," said she, in a voice still agitated with joyous emotion, "to seek out a sure hand by which succours may be forthwith transmitted to Holland to the son of my father's late noble friend,—who may be in plight of need ill becoming the honours of his name,—with which this deed of instruction shall be conveyed, that no mal-interpretations may be placed on our proceedings."

It was in vain that the good notary pleaded in reply the danger of intermeddling, at such a crisis, with the affairs of an outlawed man so obnoxious to the existing government as the son of the late Lord Lovell. He assured her that her own safety

and her father's might be fatally involved in the discovery of their intercourse.

"At the court of the Princess of Orange, madam," said he, "the name of Lovell will be a sufficient warrant of welfare. The young lord, moreover, is doubtless already on his way to Paris to rejoin the king and queen-mother, to whom his recent exploits must have signally recommended him. Be patient. There will come a time hereafter for these explanations. Lord Lovell's thoughts are less likely to be of forfeitures and mortgages, than of the safety of his worthy uncle, sole representative besides himself of their ancient line. While the sword of justice still hangs suspended over the head of Sir Richard Lovell, let us not wrong this wayward youth by supposing that his mind is directed towards his farms and messuages in the shire of Northampton."

Unwilling to prolong the argument, Lady Lovell directed her steps towards the house, as if subdued to acquiescence. It did not appear necessary to acquaint her attorney-at-law that it was at least as likely the young exile should pass in review the conduct of his new wife and father-in-law, as that he should restrict his cares to the fate of a war-and-weather-beaten uncle, from whom the haughty prejudices of his Roman Catholic mother had been careful to estrange his affections.

From that memorable evening, the spirits of poor

Anne seemed to alternate between glee at the unlooked-for escape of Charles and his followers, and grief for the fate of the royal cause, and the one revered victim whose memory she honoured with sable weeds, befitting the reverence of a daughter. There was no fear that her mourning garb would excite the notice of her now imbecile parent; and when Elias Wright remonstrated that it might be reported of her as indicative of too dear a sympathy in the fate of the cavaliers, she replied by a look of silent and dignified reproach, which announced her determination to be immutable.

"To rock the cradle of declining age" became now her exclusive and pious task. Abandoning to her trustworthy agent the guard and conduct of her worldly affairs, she devoted herself wholly to retirement; and if subdued in spirit by the constant spectacle of the life-in-death that was endured rather than enjoyed by Mr. Heneage, she was somewhat reconciled to his state on finding that it spared him the terrors of examination by the commissioners of sequestration employed to investigate the nature of his tenure of the Lovell estates, and the spectacle of the harsh administration of the law under the auspices of the new government. While Elias Wright, through his party alliances and professional adroitness, managed by a cautious distribution of bribery to secure the rights which his principals, sooner than stoop to such means, would have aban-

doned to the encroachments of their rulers, he excused his mode of administration in the eyes of his young charge by exercising similar mal-practices in behalf of Sir Richard Lovell, who, while his fellow-prisoners, the Earl of Derby, Sir Timothy Featherstone, and others, were put to death by authority of a court-martial, was remanded to prison, his sentence being commuted to a heavy fine and two years' imprisonment in Newgate gaol.

It was a weary winter at Dalesdene. Even the ensuing summer found Lady Lovell (now on the eve of her seventeenth birthday, and exhibiting a development of womanly beauty which, could he have been sensible to the charm, must have enraptured the doating eyes of her poor old father) still a mourner, and still a sedulous recluse. Mistress Corbet, who in her time had "sat at good men's feasts" and basked in the sunshine of worldly pleasures, began to lament that the lovely youth of her pupil should be fated to blush unseen in the unincidental wilderness of the Grange, for which murmurs the good woman was duly rebuked by the wiser Elias.

"Rather rejoice," said he, "that the tenour of her defenceless days is thus secured from the persecution which, under other circumstances, would, I doubt not, await her from the vindictive spirit of her husband. In these times, when even the daughters of kings are abased, when the royal sister of Charles Stuart keepeth her bed, lacking fuel to preserve her shivering

limbs against the winter's frost—when Hyde and Ormond, and other noble counsellors of his Majesty, are known to be shoeless and shirtless,* subsisting upon the charity of strangers—let not those who abide in peace and prosperity indulge in discontents most sinful in the eyes of a protecting Providence. Better days may be in store; or if not, be thankful, both for yourself and her, that worse be not dispensed us. Our gentle one walketh in the path of duty. She could do no more were her steps appointed to the purlieus of the courts of kings, wherein—as our experience shows—is neither profit nor salvation."

* *Vide* the Letters of Clarendon from the Hague.

CHAPTER IX.

FIVE years had elapsed from the memorable period to which Lady Lovell still continued to revert as the commencement of her time of tribulation. The Protectorate was now established; and, saving when some imputation of a royalist or popish plot condemned new lives to the gibbet, and new lands to sequestration, the very name of Charles Stuart seemed scarcely to be had in remembrance in the land. Though the people of England had seen the liberties confirmed to them by their great charter more scandalously violated by the self-styled upholders and reformers of the law than under the despotic sceptre of Charles the Martyr, they had learned to crouch to the lash; piously submitting to drink the vinegar and hyssop presented to them under such plausible pretences of divine sanction and grace.

But though the captivity of the nation seemed ordained, the time was come for Anne Lovell's eman-

cipation from her dutiful thraldom. Her poor lethargic parent slept to wake no more. Within a few months after his daughter's attainment of her majority, Mr. Heneage was laid in the parish church of Dalesdene, beside the fair young wife whom he had been so strangely sentenced to survive. On the occurrence of this event, it was the express desire of Lady Lovell that she might be left in unmolested solitude for the space of a month following the funeral; a ceremony which, unsought by the survivors, was honoured by the presence of the local magistrates, in deference to the good citizenship of a man whose estates contributed so largely to the maintenance of government, and who (paralytic and idiotic) opposed no obstacle to its course. But, at the expiration of the four appointed weeks, Master Wright proceeded as usual to the Grange, prepared to deliver to its young mistress his opinions and provisions touching the further ordering of her career.

No sooner had he entered her presence than the old notary discovered that he was there simply to receive the signification of her own; that the high-minded young woman of one-and-twenty was never more to be argued from her noble purposes into the narrow path of expediency.

"Having resolved to quit a spot wherein I have endured so many painful trials," said she, in a firm and composed voice, "let me be the first to inform my venerable friend that it is my intention to take up

my abode at Lovell House. It is not fitting that so fine a seat should fall to ruin and decay. The sentence of banishment against Lord Lovell is for life. He hath repelled, as you well know, with scorn and indignity, our written offers to place the estate under his control by nominal redemption—the sequestration of his whole ancestral property having rendered all other means unattainable; and it is now my purpose to do honour to the name which (perforce) I wear, by maintaining fitting state and grace in the family mansion. Your wise counsels have, I trust, in some degree instructed me in ordering of my affairs; yet the only regret I experience in quitting this ill-omened home of my youth, is the knowledge that it will remove me from the neighbourhood of my second father. To say to the aged tree, 'Uproot thyself, and come with me to overshadow my new dwelling,' were, I know, a mockery. Nevertheless, chambers will be set apart for you and yours at Lovell House; and if in its abandonment you will deign to find your summer pastime at the Grange, the old place will be kept up, to remain henceforward at your disposal. It would rejoice me that the faithful friend of my father and grandfather should occupy Dalesdene in my room."

Lady Lovell paused, overcome by emotion; but she would neither listen to the good man's thanks for securing a Goshen to his old age, nor to his remonstrances touching the cheerless life she must

lead in a mansion like Lovell House, to which her present household establishment was wholly inadequate.

"You mistake my purpose," replied Lady Lovell. "It is my intention to adapt my modes of life to the limits of my noble fortune. My fate hath been unhappily appointed; but all the happiness I am ever to enjoy—all the duties I am ever to fulfil—are as much within my grasp at present as ever they will become hereafter. Twelve months shall I devote to do homage to my father's memory; after which look to see me assume the place which I should occupy were Lord Lovell already numbered with the dead."

For a moment the old man experienced some alarm at this announcement. His knowledge of the frivolous nature of womankind tempted a passing apprehension of purposed levity. But he soon checked himself with self-rebuke, on calling to mind the unerring prudence of Lady Lovell's afflicted career,—her nobleness, her generosity, her forgiveness of injuries, her sympathy with the wants, miseries, and frailties of her fellow-creatures. She stood beside him, in her beauty and serenity, a superior being; and when, on the day appointed for her departure from the Grange, he saw her followed to the verge of her estate by the prayers and benedictions of the people among whom, from childhood, she had abided, he was fain to confess that

their tears bore witness to her excellence. Not even her farewell benefactions could reconcile the poor people to the idea of losing sight of their guardian angel.

Lady Lovell, meanwhile, had affectionately declined the old gentleman's escort to Lovell House. She even ordered her measures for Mistress Corbet to remain some hours behind her at the Grange, so as to enable her to reach her new residence unaccompanied. Not that she indulged in the puerile vanity of wishing to present herself potentially to the people over whom her rule was appointed, and who, for years past, had loved her as an unknown benefactress. She wished only to enjoy unobserved the emotions likely to arise from her inauguration,—the emotions of the contemned wife of a banished husband, about to consecrate her life to the fulfilment of duties in which choice and necessity alike forbade his participation.

Ten years before, she had visited the place, a wild, gamesome girl, accompanying her father in a visit of ceremony to the roof of his only friend, the formalities of which had been pain and grief to the insubordinate Anne. Yet, long as was the period intervening since that week of penance, every circumstance and every feature of the spot was indelibly impressed upon her memory. It was the only mansion, besides her own dull house, with which she was familiar. She remembered the stately hall; the old tapestry of the corridors, to the grim

figures of which she went childishly curtseying along as she retired with Dame Audrey for the night; the armoury, the chapel, the falconry, and, above all, a certain canal, embanked by a certain terrace, from whence, but for the uncouth aid afforded by her playmate, young Lovell, she must have slipped into the waters below, one day when they had escaped by stealth from the house to enjoy the graceless sport of pelting the old grey carp with quinces from an equally venerable tree that twisted its hoary arms at one extremity of the canal.

She remembered, even now, the fierce reprimand they had jointly undergone from the imperious Lady Lovell, who chanced to encounter the young truants as, dripping and exhausted, they stole back to the hall. She remembered how the dear good lord had stood their advocate when their misdemeanour was recounted to the circle in the saloon, into which they were dragged for reprehension and judgment. She remembered—she remembered—there was no end to those trivial but precious recollections!

She had purposely evaded the demonstrations of welcome, which she was forewarned by Elias Wright her tenants were anxious to make in her honour, by arriving at Lovell House several hours previous to her announcement; so that, when her old-fashioned equipage rolled into the park, the peasantry had not yet gathered together for the purposed procession.

"Let them not suppose me ungrateful," was her apology to her auditor, Master Shum, who came to tender his respects as she entered the hall. "But the mourning dress I wear, and the respect due to the memory of the great and good man who last inhabited these walls, ought to forbid all tumultuous show of rejoicing."

Touched by this homage to the memory of his beloved lord, the grey-headed steward who was attending them quitted her in tears. All preparation of mirth and music was abandoned; and the lady was left, as she desired, to wander alone through the deserted galleries of the house, to seek the well-recollected saloon, the garden, the terrace, the all and everything that spake audibly to her soul of times of old.

For one circumstance, however, Lady Lovell had not prepared herself. Above the mantel-piece in that very saloon hung a portrait of her old playmate, limned at the instance of his adoring mother by the immortal Vandyke; one of those speaking pictures to which that matchless painter had the skill to impart a lifelike resemblance, combined with an air of spirit and nobleness in which the original might be deficient. Like the Creator of mankind, it was in the image of his own genius that the artist had fashioned his work.

Alone with that breathing canvas, Lady Lovell stood riveted to the spot. *There*, then, was the

living object of all her reveries, all her hopes—the origin of all her sorrows, the source of all her humiliation! *There* was the lofty brow of him who disdained her; the glowing, the impressive, the commanding face by which, when seated by his side, she had been made to shrink into herself! She saw nothing of her old playmate in the picture,—nothing of the scapegrace,—the snarer of squirrels, and pelter of carp. It was her bridegroom—the fiery youth, who, rebelling even while he obeyed against his father's mandate, had loathingly accepted her hand as a ransom for the prosperity of his king, and a pledge of his own inauguration into the loyal toils of war.

All the woman was roused in her heart as she gazed and gazed upon the picture; and the tears suffusing her eyes were alternately sweet with tenderness, and bitter with indignation. But what a prize had she obtained in an object thus capable of calling into existence the dearest emotions of the soul! What had the desolate walls of Dalesdene to boast of, comparable with that talisman of power?

Spell-bound by the charm, she stood contemplating the picture,—exquisite as a work of art, priceless as a personal memento,—till she had made even its slightest details familiar to her eye; the very shaping of the satin vest and cloak of velvet, the very turn of the flowing feather gracing the beaver, held

carelessly by the hand of the distinguished youth; when, as if she had gazed till gazing left her nothing further to recognize, she turned slowly away to quit the chamber.

But no sooner had she reached the door than, with a deep sigh, she retraced her steps, and took her station as before; having first assured herself, by glancing towards the windows and recesses of the chamber, that she was safe from the watchfulness of prying eyes. It was not till nearly an hour had elapsed that Lady Lovell found herself bending her steps along the stately gravel-walks intersecting the Dutch garden, which reached to the windows of the southern frontage of the house; while the green slopes of the park were overlooked by the porch of entrance that adorned the northern façade towards the terrace and canal, which, as she rightly recollected, formed the western boundary of the parterres.

Nothing had been changed there since the period of her first visit. At that time the troubles of the times had left little leisure, either to king or subject, for the adornment of their native Sparta; and from the disastrous epoch which had placed the domain under the control of Heneage's daughter, it was her command that not a stone should be moved, or a shrub uprooted on the spot. The strictest order had been preserved; the gardens were in the most trimly array. It was not with Lovell House as with

the sober herbary at Dalesdene Grange. All the horticultural arts and secrets transplanted from the fair gardens of St. Germain by the queen-mother, had been borrowed from Hampton Court by Lady Lovell, the daughter of one of Henrietta Maria's most favourite courtiers; and now, in the propitious month of June, the roses of Provins and Putaux were intermingling their luxuriant blossoms with the heavy heads of rich carnations and fragrant clusters of many-coloured pinks and gillyflowers. So sweet, so variegated, so brilliant, was the aspect of the flower-garden, that nothing short of the attraction of happy reminiscences would have directed the steps of the lady up the ascent of the old terrace.

Foreign to the design of the garden of which it formed the boundary, and to feed whose fountains the embanked reservoir was intended, nothing had been done for the adornment of the spot. All—all was as of old! The old grey carp still lay basking in the limpid waters; a collection of curious reeds, cultivated at one extremity, were throwing up their feathery bloom into the sunshine; and though the old quince-tree at the further extremity revealed at present no mellow fruitage amid its denser summer verdure, there was, in compensation, the exquisite fragrance of a low hedge of sweet brier and honeysuckles that skirted the canal, having been planted on the spot in consequence of the escapade of Arthur and Anne, in order to preserve

both Lord Lovell's aged carp and juvenile visitors from further misadventure.

"I shall be happier here than in Rutlandshire," mused Lady Lovell, when, after a prolonged sojourn on the spot, she bent her steps, with flushed cheeks and in a softened mood of mind, through the fragrant dusk of a June evening towards the house. "The grounds of Dalesdene lie too low for health. This place hath a freer air,—a drier site. That fine old library promises ample funds of entertainment. Yes! I shall be more cheerful here than in Rutlandshire."

Nor were these comfortable prognostications disappointed. Both the lady and the lady's household rejoiced in the change. Old Gervas had lost, by the death of his infirm master, his occupation at Dalesdene, and was glad to quit the place; while Mistress Corbet and Dame Audrey gloried in beholding their beloved charge intent upon assuming at least the outward tokens of her noble condition.

"Since this hateful marriage must needs hang like a clog of lead upon her young existence," said the good gouvernante to Elias Wright, at the old notary's first visit to their new residence, "let her at least enjoy the worldly honours of her position. In these kingless and courtless times, small account belongs to titles of worldly distinction; but personal recreation need not therefore be unattainable. While the Protector amuses his leisure by playing the

charioteer with his team of Friesland horses in Hyde Park, surely my Lady Lovell may be permitted to enjoy her rides a-coursing on Black Maud, or divert herself with repairing and re-establishing yonder ruined mews, without offence in the eyes of God or man. The sport imparts vigour to her frame, and cheerfulness to her mind."

"It may serve at least to distract careful thoughts," interrupted the good old man; "she was ever a mad rider. Before your precepts had trained the wilful child into the gentle woman, I have seen her drive her father to distraction, good sooth, by clearing the hedge as neatly as the best foxhunter in the shire! Long may she content herself with such pastimes! Even sobered as city life hath become under the guidance of the Lord Protector, I were loth that this fair and friendless creature should be tempted Londonward by the perilous pleasures of the capital."

CHAPTER X.

For three years or more after the inauguration of Lady Lovell did the prayers of her worthy ex-guardian prove propitious. The heaviness of mind arising from the daily spectacle of her father's miserable plight, had given place to the impulses of cheerfulness and health. Sufficient excitement awaited her in the delight of promoting the welfare of those committed to her care; and in due time she resumed her former occupations and studies. Virgil, though venerated as an ancient friend, was made to yield his place upon her favourite book-shelf to the sterling poets of her own country; and with Shakspeare and Spenser, Milton and Marlowe, she associated those minstrels of France whose witty lucubrations were at that time scattered upon the court of Louis XIV., like sparks from some glittering firework. Graver studies were not wholly neglected; but though theology and philosophy had

their share in her respect as well as their allotted stations in the old library, it may be inferred that so bright an eye lingered oftener on the fascinating pages of the Arcadia, or the biting verses of Despréaux, than on the rugged records of spiritual controversy, or the doctrines of the schools.

Old Elias Wright was sometimes heard to enlarge, on his return to his prim domicile at Oakham, upon the miraculous gifts of the accomplished lady, whom he represented to his wondering granddaughters as transcending the fair and hapless pupil of Roger Ascham. He announced her as uniting the learning of Lady Jane Grey with the piety and discretion of the matrons of Holy Writ; and it was precisely while indulging in one of these eulogistic rhapsodies, that, on the eve of one of his occasional visits to Northamptonshire, the old gentleman was startled by the perusal of the following epistle:—

"Lovell House, Oct. 4, 1657.

"In the expectation of my dear old friend's arrival on Friday next, according to engagement, I feel it an act of justice to apprize him that he will find settled, if not exactly under my roof, at least 'within my gates,' a military officer, a gentleman of ancient descent, to whose domestication with me he may, perhaps, be moved to take exception. Lest, however, the intimation should determine him in tenderness of conscience to deprive me of the society of

my sweet friend young Hope (whom I hereby remind him of his promise to have with us as a sometime guest), I must be permitted to assure my kind guardian that, though known to the country round, the domiciliation of my new friend at Lovell hath produced neither scandal nor disapproval. My neighbours seem to coincide in my opinion that my deserted condition leaves me at full liberty to select my fireside companions.

"Before you pronounce a different opinion, dearest sir, see and judge for yourself. I prognosticate that on this, as on other occasions, you will not have courage to find fault with the domestic arrangements of your faithful friend and loving ward,

"A. Lovell."

Profoundly grieved by the levity with which this fearful backsliding from her eminence of virtue was announced, old Elias determined to persevere in his plan of visiting the unfortunate culprit,—not with any purpose of misplaced leniency, but in order to bestow upon her the admonitions which, in spite of her emancipation from his authority, he felt entitled to offer to the daughter of his friend. He could have wept over her fall, but for the recollection of having sometimes seen her humour inspired by gleams of her former childish mirthfulness, so as to induce the hope that she might be making sport of his credulity.

Nevertheless, as his two granddaughters were now under his control—his aged partner having sunk before him into the grave—the prudent Elias bestowed his pretty Hope and Rachel with their uncle Shum, rather than hazard their encounter at Lovell House with some disbanded captain, one of the locusts by which, since the cessation of the civil wars, the country had, to its cost, been overrun.

For the first time since the settlement of Lady Lovell in Northamptonshire, Elias approached the gates of Lovell House with a feeling of reluctance. The very pacing nag on which he had oftentimes before performed the little journey seemed to participate in its master's repugnance, being fairly knocked up before he reached within five miles of his destination, so that it was a welcome sight when he descried on the high road the coach and six with its outriders, which announced that his dutiful charge had either come or sent before to do him honour. He trusted that the equipage alone had been despatched to meet him. The feelings of pain and embarrassment with which he saw the velvet footstep let down, advised him of the anguish of spirit he should experience on beholding, in tarnished glory, the hitherto peerless and unblemished Anne.

Happily for his self-possession, she was alone in the spacious coach: she had not insulted her venerable monitor by the presence of her minion. Grieved, however, was he to behold how little her countenance

was abashed by the consciousness of shame. Her bright eyes shone more resplendent than ever. Her coral lips unclosed more frequently to disclose her pearly teeth and adorn her cheek with dimples; and as to her deportment, it was alternately that of a wood-nymph and a queen. The finely-developed form of Lady Lovell now attested the zenith of womanly beauty, and her face was bright with genius as the earth with summer sunshine.

Master Wright had premeditated to launch, the first moment of their meeting, into the subject uppermost in his thoughts. But this point, he discovered, lay not at his own discretion. The moment he was seated by her side, his fair companion opened upon him one of those batteries of female loquacity which, though reserved like certain other batteries to be fired off on occasions of public display, are as unsilenceable as more warlike engines. Her ladyship had news to relate how the Dowager Lady Lovell (compelled two years before to fly from England by the sequestration of her Shropshire estates) had taken refuge in a convent of Ursulines at Bruges, wherein her unquiet spirit was creating such broils as to call down the interposition and reprimands of the archbishop. Then, ere Elias could interrupt her with inquiries touching the sources of her information, she beset him with prattle of the latest news from court, the approaching marriages of the two daughters of the Protector with the Viscount Fauconberg, and the

grandson of Oliver's faithful friend, the Earl of Warwick;—predicting, from these concessions to the aristocracy, that the kingly crown recently rejected by his highness would not always be so coldly repulsed.

"It seems that Whitehall is becoming almost as censorious and full of prate as in the rampant days of monarchy," quoth she, with a merry laugh. "How judge you of my Lord Protector's buffooning it so idly as to thrust burning embers into the boots of his pretty playmate, old Ludlow, to punish him for his sluggardliness of a morning, when on a visit at Hampton Court? 'Once a man,' quoth the proverb, 'twice a child.' Methinks our godly governor inclineth anew to leading-strings."

After smiling away Master Wright's reprehensions of the rashness of her discourse, Lady Lovell secured herself further from his reprimands by relating the high festivities she had recently enjoyed with her noble neighbours at Abethorpe House, with her friends at Laxton Hall, and the worshipful knight at Barnwell Castle.

"Presbyterian or episcopalian, royalist or leveller, I have not a neighbour whose door uncloseth not in hospitality at my coming," said she. "Nay, I sometimes progress so far as Kimbolton, Boughton, or Drayton Manor, to vary my cheer, and keep up friendly fellowship with those who mean me kindly. For what influence ought politics to obtain over the

feelings of a poor weak woman, whose best of judgment availeth no further than the fattening of her turkeys or cutting of her hay, and whose notions of good government are neither with those who did illegally slay a king, nor those who would unlawfully assassinate a chief magistrate? I would fain behold both more and less of liberty established in this island than is likely to chance within half a dozen generations to come; and, conscious of the impotency of my aspiration, the name of king or kaisar, protector or parliament, never (save in colloquy with a friend so sure as my kind guardian) is suffered to escape my lips. Helpless as my poor father, my impunity lies in the same spirit of caution which influenced his blameless existence. Even the rash and freespoken soldier with whom I pass my life," added Lady Lovell, stealing an inquiring glance at old Elias, "is not privileged to broach the forbidden subject in my presence. We should else lead an ill life together!"

The old gentleman, instantly laying hold upon the text, was about to commence his homily, when, as at that moment they entered the stately gates of the park, he was startled by perceiving, perched on a grassy knoll, yet half hidden in a thicket of feathery beeches, a modest mansion, a newly-raised erection, which might have been mistaken for an ornamental building intended to close some vista from the house, had not Lady Lovell, following the direction of his

eyes, announced it to be the residence of her new favourite.

"I would ask you to stop with me on our way, and admire the elegance of an elevation designed by my accomplished self," said she, "but that I am pretty sure my friend must be at the great house, impatiently awaiting our arrival. Ay, there he is, in sooth, in my flower-garden, whipping off the heads of my hollyhocks with his riding wand, and taking advantage of his influence over my feelings to play the spoiler!"

Master Wright was now too indignant for words, when, lo! as he attempted to conceal his emotion by affecting to look forth and catch a view of this libertine object of an unprincipled attachment, his eyes fell upon a figure scarcely less corpulent than that of his brother-in-law Hosea; while a red jovial face, set off to advantage by the jaunty feather of a slouched hat, scarcely in character with the half-military cut of his riding-suit, announced a Romeo of somewhat extraordinary presentment.

"Thou'st made good speed, sweet niece!" cried a cheerful voice, as the old soldier advanced to hand Lady Lovell from her coach. "I expected thee not till dinner, and the last quarter hath not yet chimed o' the clock. Master Wright, my honest friend, I hold it a good day that enables me once more to clap hands with thee. Our last meeting chanced in an unseemly place, where, but for the aid of this

good girl, I might until this hour have abided—or, I should say, her aid backed by thy assistance in bringing me the last instructions of my poor brother in her behalf; whereby I knew the prejudices of my nephew and his brimstone of a mother were groundless, and that I wronged not the name of Lovell by accepting succour at her hands."

During this exposition, Master Wright found himself conducted between Lady Lovell and her frank-spoken but wordy companion through the porch into the great hall; where the latter, after pausing suddenly, and examining from top to toe what changes the lapse of five weary years might have effected in the person of the venerable notary to whom he stood so largely indebted, exclaimed in a voice of gratitude, "Body o' me, but the air of the old Grange hath given thee the complexion of a spark of five-and-twenty! Thou'rt younger by half, man, than when thou didst wrangle so convincingly in my behalf with the Lords Commissioners at Westminster! My name's not Dickon Lovell, but thou art heartier than ever!"

The alarms of the good old guardian thus happily brought to a conclusion, right glad was he to pledge a cup of welcome with the burly knight, to whom, on the expiration of the imprisonment to which his sentence was commuted, he had been the means of rendering important service; and Mistress Corbet, as she sat simpering over her knitting-needles during

their half-hour of wearying for dinner, could not choose but admire the wonder with which Master Wright listened to Sir Richard Lovell's narrative of his niece's successful negotiations with government for the rescinding of his sentence of banishment.

"Faith, the girl hath grown a finer diplomat than old Cottington, and a better lawyer than Ned Hyde!" cried he. "Were she a stauncher supporter of the hereditary principles of the House of Lovell, I should not mind proposing to make a chancellor of her, if ever the king should enjoy his own again. I wager the judgment under her ladyship's coif against all the wisdom housed under the wide wig of Harry Bennet!"

On the graver expounding of the chances and changes which had ended by fixing Sir Richard Lovell as a resident on the lands of his fathers, it appeared that the worthy gentleman had both taken and given disgusts at the court (if court it could be styled) of the exiled king. The freedom of his remonstrances with a youth of whose boyhood he had been at one time governor, was received by Charles, *not* with the careless levity to have been expected from his habitual listlessness, but with a degree of resentment, inspired by the worthless woman who at that period exercised unlimited influence over his mind, and whose contempt of all decency, and offensiveness in the eyes of even his most devoted sub

jects, founded the groundwork of the old general's reprehensions.

"I loved the boy too well not to bear much at his hands," said Sir Richard, as he narrated, over a tall bottle of Rhenish, to Master Elias, the grievances which had stirred up his wrath; "more especially from knowing that it was as much as his kingship could manage out of his French pension (scarce as much, by our lady, as would have kept the hounds of his royal father's kennel in meal!) to find himself in cloak and doublets, with a couple of crowns per diem for bread and board. But when I saw, forsooth, that the hussy Barlow was suffered to make game of my blunt bearing for his Majesty's sport, and that Bob Sydney, Harry Jermyn, and who not, was listened to with complaisance (let them use what hard terms they list), while *my* slightest aspersion of blame was pished and pshawed away with the freest contempt, I got weary of wasting my years among a nation of *parly vous*, and a handful of countrymen who despised me; and as the king, on his departure from France to take up his abode at Cologne, made no motion to me to resume my service and follow him, I, being left behind, like a needy bisognon, of whom he had no longer occasion, was entreated of Judge Lockhart, when he arrived in Paris as negotiator betwixt the Cardinal and the Protector, to suffer him to pave the way for my return to my native country. That the concession was obtained without loss of

honour to myself, be the name of Dick Lovell my guarantee! That it was obtained without loss of profit to Master Noll's exchequer, be the noble advances made in my behalf by my good niece a sterling evidence!"

"Nevertheless, it was scarcely to have been hoped," replied the wary attorney, convinced that part of the truth was withheld from him by his bluff companion, "that the brother of the late Lord Lovell would consent to receive grace at the hands of his highness?"

"Would you have had him consent to receive insults at the hands of a brainless boy?" cried Sir Richard, falling instantly into the snare. "Did not Charles Stuart (doubtless at the instigation of the arch-caitiff Hyde) presume to propose to a loyal servant of his sainted father—a faithful son of his native country—did he not presume, I say, to propose to *me*—Dick Lovell, the Wors'ter man—to become fellow-cutthroat, and brother-stabber, with such bravoes as Sexby and Syndercomb? 'T was well for his Majesty that I bore the offence against my honour with no worse reproof than snapping my sword asunder and throwing it at his feet! But, thanks to the babbling of Mistress Lucy, the thing got wind; and so it fell out that when the court moved to Cologne to make way for the emissaries of the Protector, it left behind on the causeway some wagon-load or so of unpaid tapster's reckonings, some score

or two of fatherless bantlings, and one Dick Lovell, in a threadbare suit and patched hose, but without speck or blemish on his reputation."

"I could have sworn it!" cried the old notary, his eyes filled with tears. "Still the same high spirit that gave me so many wounds to salve over, ere I could manage to bring him in safety through the warder's gate!"

"The caitiffs fancied, my good Master Wright," resumed Sir Richard, "that their 'Killing no murder' had thrown dust in my eyes as in those of Gonthier's, to whose hot blood 't was addressed by Master Titus, whom I shame me (damn him!) to call colonel! But for myself, I was ever a crabbed hand at sophistry. Fighting in fair field is a trade accordant with my notions; but your assassins on political principles (ay, even including Madam Judith and Madam Jael, of saintly memory) I hold no better than any other gibbet-bird."

"And my young Lord Lovell?" interposed Elias, lowering his voice, though aware that three chambers' space lay between the eating-room and the favourite saloon of her ladyship.

"My nephew abideth still at Cologne," replied Sir Richard, bluntly.

"No offence having been offered him at the hands of the king," persisted Elias, "his lordship felt perhaps that there was none to be taken?"

"So would not have felt his noble father!" cried

the old general, smiting the table impatiently with his fist. "In my brother's time, an insult offered to any member of the house of Lovell was instantly felt and resented at its fountain-head. The honour of the family vibrated to him as to its centre. It was not my poor Lovell (God bless him!) who would have remained boon companion and fellow-ruffler with the man, were he thrice a Stuart and thrice a king, who could propose to a Lovell to embrue his hands in blood!"

"There is as much difference of nature 'twixt the late and the present lord, as betwixt jet and ivory," quoth Master Wright, with a sorrowful sigh. "Would he, who was so loving and regardful a husband, even to the shrewish daughter of Lord Bristol, have left yonder sweet rose to wither unnoticed on the virgin-stem, a martyr to his disdains?"

"There lives not another gentleman in Europe besides my nephew, capable of such ungrateful injury!" cried Lovell. "That (ta'en at a moment's disadvantage) the boy, prompted by his mother, may have been apt to resent a too arbitrary disposal of his hand, I can well understand. But that when, having looked upon the fairness of his young wife, and heard proof of her excellence—her forbearance with his vixen mother—her prodigal care of his old profitless uncle—her goodness to his servitors, his tenants, his dependants—her unspotted prudence and modesty—(nay, I shall scarcely end if I come to

make the catalogue of her admitted perfections!)—that knowing all this, I say, he should prefer to fling away the substance yet remaining to him, his youth, his honour, his renown, by emulating the vices of the prince of whom he hath become the tag and parasite, is a thing to make mad those who have an interest in his welfare. I swear to you, good Master Wright, that since I have abided here, and been hourly witness of the good deeds of the sweetest and most mettlesome wench that ever stept a coranto or sat in saddle, scarce have I forborne a curse upon the delusion which keepeth young Lovell a slave to the meretricious attractions of a Parisian light o' love."

"And is it even so? Alas! for my want of charity, I did interpret as much!" ejaculated the old notary.

"Hush, hush!" cried Sir Richard, laying his finger on his lips, in token of caution. "Trusting that the chances of time may bring round happier prospects for the family, which, as matters stand, and in my presumptive heirdom whereafter the ancient name of Lovell ceaseth to be, I have studiously concealed from my sweet niece my own bootless pains to bring her graceless spouse to a more becoming mood. Lady Lovell knows nothing, as I trust, of his misdeeds; and her noble concession of the net rent-roll of this estate is, I fancy, now remitted to Cologne, where, since the departure of the court from Paris, the young libertine abideth."

"A noble concession have you rightly termed it, honoured sir," replied Elias Wright, "for by law (redemption by fine having been refused by his lordship) the last penny is solely and by clause of *excouverture* her own. Nay, sorely doth it go against my conscience, as trustee of the same, to observe that no sooner doth the quarterly payment reach her hand than 't is despatched to the agency of Messrs. Whitecross, of the Barbican, to be by them remitted to the exiled lord."

"To be lost at primero to the sauntering scapegrace of a king; or worse, to be lavished on laces and brocade in order that there may be a rival to the profligate prodigality of Bess Killigrew, Kitty Pegge, and the worshipful Mistress Lucy Walters!"

"Fie on it!" cried old Elias, lifting his hands and eyes with a look of consternation. "No wonder the Lord Protector hath ceased to take heed of the movements of a court whose morals, being thus heinously misgoverned, entail upon Charles Stuart an obloquy fatal to all projects of restoration."

"Under your favour, master notary," cried Sir Richard, "Old Noll would do ill to withdraw his cognizance from the movements of a set whose motto is, 'Take and slay, for of the blood of an usurper the Lord absolveth thy hand!'"

A summons from Lady Lovell now invited them to the saloon; when, the evening being fair and mild, Sir Richard proposed to his lady niece that

Master Wright should accompany them to visit his new abode.

"This wilful child," quoth the old general, throwing on his beaver, and placing his arm in that of Lady Lovell, as though choosing to accept support from her rather than offer her the protection of his unwieldy feebleness, "was pleased to opine that the old swash-buckler knight of Naseby and Marston Moor would scarce find his sufficient independence as a denizen under her roof. She willed me, in short, to be my own master, without regard to the time and convenience of her dainty ladyship; and so hath she escaped, may be, the filthy fumes of her nuncle's evening pipe, the ungodly ejaculations (Anglicè oaths) of his body servant, Sergeant Swatchem, whose profaneness defies mulct of church-session or the stocks of the quorum;—to say nothing of the ill manners of Stark and Sturm, my two Flemish boar-hounds, who, as you may perceive, await me yonder on the threshold, as if apprized of the boundaries of Dickon's Fort, whereto their mischiefs are by statute confined."

"My worthy guardian perceives also, I trust," added Lady Lovell, "that though provided with a sulking-den of your own wherein to pursue your whims and avocations, my dear uncle's word is a law at Lovell Court, even to her by whose hands he condescended to be raised to the power of legislation."

Sir Richard now hastened to exhibit to his venerable guest the admirable distribution of his snuggery; the cool chamber he styled his barrack-room, shaded by lofty beech-trees, that threw their smooth branches over the southern frontage of the house, hung with maps and charts, and a few choice specimens of armour, interspersed with curiosities, *then* really rare, trophies of the old soldier's Guiana and Jamaica voyages, removed by Anne from the hall of the family mansion, wherein, in happier years, they had been deposited. Close beside the fireplace, and within immediate view of the arm-chair of the general, hung miniature copies of Vandyke's stately portraits of his brother and nephew; but while Lady Lovell withdrew (to speak a few kind words to the veteran sergeant, who was busy at his favourite occupation of digging in the little garden which, anticipating the general's wishes, she had caused to be laid out in the rear of the house), Sir Richard did not fail to remark, with an expressive wink to his companion, "Were it not in regard to yonder poor girl's feelings and the precept that 'Blessed are the peace-makers,' into the fire would go that noble-faced picture of my ignoble nephew. But the smallest of Nancy's gifts is dear to me; so even let it hang there, though the original deserve to hang elsewhere."

It was a happy night's rest that awaited the pillow of the good old notary. He had not courage to

reprove his light-hearted ward for practising upon his credulity. It was not to be expected that, at buoyant three-and-twenty, Lady Lovell should intuitively assume the sober starchness which sat upon the pinched cap of Mistress Corbet. She had enjoyed her laugh at her guardian's expense, and Elias was not the man to grudge so innocent an indulgence to her whose sole enjoyment on earth was manifested in the promotion of the happiness of others. Nay, the very morrow brought convincing proof, if proof were wanting, of this tendency of her disposition. To the great amazement of Elias Wright, he found, on returning from a visitation to the different farms in company with the resident steward and auditor, his nephew, Enoch Shum, that his two nieces and the major had been secretly brought over from Oakham, to meet him under the hospitable roof of Lovell House.

"Now that you are at ease in your mind, my honoured friend, touching the decorum of my household connections," cried Lady Lovell, laughing heartily, as she drew forward the blushing Hope and smiling Rachel, to be saluted by their startled uncle and agitated cousin, "I have ventured to secure the company of these damsels. Rachel shall be my guest so long as it pleaseth you to spare her from your solitary fireside. But of my young friend Hope, prepare yourself to see no more, either at Oakham or Dalesdene Grange!"

The whole party gazed wonderingly at Lady Lovell, uncertain to what new device this strange announcement tended.

"Young eyes and ears are in some matters shrewder than old," resumed the noble lady, still holding within her own the hand of young Mistress Wright. "It hath been whispered to me that between certain cousins, now in presence, there is so much liking as will determine my young Master Shum to seek in marriage the hand I hold, when by his industry he shall have achieved the means of maintaining a household. These means are henceforward his own. His stipend is from this day doubled; his limit of apartments at Lovell House extended, to afford fitting residence to a wife who will become (your good leaves obtained) my daily companion. My dear friend yonder, Mistress Corbet, who looks on amazed at my proceedings, hath a child whom nature endows with stronger claims upon her affection than the grateful girl to whom she hath been a more than mother; yet hath she not courage to remind me that her son, recently a widower, hath appealed earnestly to his mother to come and preside over his helpless household. But finding me henceforth provided with fitting female companionship, my excellent friend will no longer feel reluctant to absent herself for a time from my roof, returning thither when peace and happiness shall be re-established in the home in which

she is to plant the olive-branch. I will not talk to *you* of worldly interests, my precious mother," continued Lady Lovell, turning with a warm embrace to her gouvernante; "yours are provided for as becomes us both; and you may feel assured that Master Shum will be expeditious in forwarding the execution of the necessary deeds; since, till they are complete, not a pen-stroke shall be made towards the settlements disposing of the dower which, in addition to what her grandfather may be disposed to bestow, I offer to the acceptance of her whom I trust he will obtain the consent of his family to salute this moment as his bride."

To throw obstacles in the way of measures thus considerately projected, was not in the nature of those already so largely indebted to the bounty of Lady Lovell. Ten days afterwards, the wedding, albeit solemnized according to the Presbyterian ritual, was held with high festivities at Lovell House; and the honeymoon, spent by the young couple at Dalesdene Grange, was curtailed only by a few days, to enable Mistress Corbet to hasten her visit to the afflicted household of her son, a Chancery lawyer of rising reputation, established in the city of Westminster.

Sir Richard, warmed by the spectacle of the general joy, was the life and soul of the gaieties arising from these well-assorted nuptials. But he could not help whispering aside to Master Elias Wright, upon the wedding-day, "Body o' me! but

I scarce refrained from a tear when I beheld my niece conducting our pretty Hope with motherly care to the altar! Unless I saw awry (for which, God wot, the hour gave poor excuse), there was a cast of care upon the brow of my Lady Lovell, avouching that the past had more share than the present in her passing thoughts. After all, friend Elias, the fairest flowers have canker in the bud. Light-hearted as at times she may appear, it would not surprise me that this good and gracious creature,— maid, wife, widow, yet enjoying no privilege from either of her conditions,—were at heart as sad as night."

Such were the eventful destinies of the lovely woman described in the outset of our history. For though the domiciliation in her household of two persons of the age of Hope and her bridegroom became a guarantee for the extension of her sports and hospitalities, it was noted by the whole county that the bolder grew Lady Lovell's exploits in the field, and the more she strove to enliven the old hall with concerts of music and other delectable entertainments, the more noticeable became that absence of mind, which, in the midst of the throng, imparted vacancy to her eyes and imposed silence on her gentle lips.

It was only the veteran general, however, who obtained privilege to rally her upon these passing fits of sadness. Even he never presumed to advert to his suspicion that they arose from rumours of the libertine career of her husband.

CHAPTER XI.

WHILE the pursuits and projects of Lovell House were thus methodically ordained, in the wide world of national destiny great events had come to pass. Time, "the setter up and puller down of princes," had at length brought back to the British throne a prince of the condemned line of Stuarts; and the people of England, so eager in bestowing the crown of martyrdom upon Charles I., proved equally enthusiastic in bestowing a temporal crown upon Charles II. He who had removed the speaker's mace from the House of Parliament as "a glittering bauble," slept in a royal grave; and in place of the austere simplicity of the Protector, another glittering bauble was decreed to his royal successor!

The kingdom, from one extremity to the other, rang with loyal acclamations; and Charles, while listening to the addresses, proclamations, attestations, and declarations of his faithful people, was

fully justified in his ejaculations to General Monk, "'Tis sure my own fault that I came not before, since not a man in my dominions but seems to have been wearing his heart out with wishes for my restoration!"

The details of those earliest days of unquiet sovereignty are not for our pages. Even the king, though arrived at the sober age of thirty years, grew almost sick of his calling,—so perplexed were his initiatory councils by the difficulty of propitiating the adversaries by whose overtures he had been brought back, and the friends by whose evil counsels he had been kept away;—between soothing the impatience of injured royalists to whom he had nothing to give, and of Cromwellians from whom he had everything to take away. As rough a contest was necessary to enable his Majesty to re-establish prelacy in his kingdom, as there had been for General Monk to re-establish his Majesty; and every now and then "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon" was suddenly brandished by the hand of some inspired millenarian, in mortal combat with the constitutional swords of justice and mercy.

Nor were these struggles and contentions between the frogs and their log always of a nature to be described in the ironical tone of the fabulist. While Monk had peremptorily and rashly silenced in parliament those sage propositions for a modification of the kingly power, which might have secured the

house of Stuart from the humiliation of being driven a second time from the throne, at Breda, King Charles had made conditions of his own invention. From the promised indemnity he had excluded all those whom parliament might adjudge to have been aiders and abettors in the death of Charles the Martyr. As a son, it was pronounced impossible for him to pardon the slayers of his father,—as a sovereign, to pardon the slayers of an anointed king; and the kind-hearted and merciful prince considered himself fortunate that warrants of execution were not forced upon his signature by the ultra-royalists, for much more than half a hundred of his subjects. Providence, as if indignant at this revengeful spilling of blood, laid the heavy hand of retribution upon the royal family; and while all this hanging and beheading proceeded, within six months of Charles's accession to the throne his young and promising brother, the Duke of Gloucester, and his eldest sister, the Princess of Orange, were conveyed to the grave of their ancestors.

A stroke far deeper, however, than even the loss of her children, awaited the haughty heart of Henrietta Maria, when, overlooking the offences committed against herself in exile, she visited the re-royalized kingdom of her son for the purpose of "looking after her dower." It was scarce a sufficient consolation to her vindictive spirit that the bodies of Cromwell, Ireton, and Bradshaw were

dislodged from their graves, dragged on a hurdle to Tyburn, suspended upon the same gibbet, and their heads decapitated and placed as a ghastly warning in front of Westminster Hall, so long as she was compelled by the will of the king to salute publicly at court, as daughter and Duchess of York, the offspring of Chancellor Hyde and his low-born wife!

But heart-burnings, public or private, could not last for ever. In process of time, the king and his minister had executed all they dared, and spared all they chose; while the people were enabled to compute to a fraction at how many millions' cost they were to purchase back their well-beloved sovereign. The revenues of the crown were settled,—the Penderels duly rewarded;—the religion of the land was by law established—the royal oak consecrated—and the husband of Mistress Palmer—that mother of many dukes—elevated to the ennoblement of partnership in a royal firm. And when at length the direful tragedy of kingly retribution had been crowned by the farce of dragging Sir Henry Mildmay, Wallop, and others, on hurdles to Tyburn, with halters round their necks, his Majesty, weary of legislating for the past, began to be of opinion that it was time to enjoy himself for the present, without much regard for the future. He found that he had angered the royalists by showing them too little countenance, and the republicans too much. He found that he had offended the republicans by showing them the rigour of the

law in place of the rigour of the gospel. All were discontented, so long as he strove to please them; and he consequently set about the more welcome task of pleasing himself.

To assist such an office, good and faithful servants and loving subjects, fair and unfair, were more readily to be found than for the arduous duties of regulating corporations, passing acts of uniformity, or conjuring out of that weakest of strong boxes—the Exchequer—the sum of £1,200,000, indispensable to stop the mouths of the most clamorous of his Majesty's creditors.

In addition to the "sweet little Barbara," Countess of Castlemaine *in esse*, and Duchess of Cleveland *in posse*, there were the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Rochester,—the handsome Sydney,—the pompous Earl of St. Albans, and his vain and giddy nephew, Harry Jermyn; the Earls of Arran and Ossory,—and the dissolute Killigrew, who governed the privacy of their prince as readily as Clarendon, Ormond, Southampton, Sandwich, Nicholas, and Moris, his public measures.

In spite of debts and reminiscences,—nay, in spite of the spectacle of that hateful window from whence the last Charles Stuart had stepped from the throne to the block,—Whitehall was now the gayest and noisiest of any royal caravansary in the civilized world. Courtiers and courtesans, musicians, jugglers, and mountebanks, found ready enter-

tainment within its walls; all the king's subjects, in fact, were welcome there, saving those threadbare cavaliers, who, having sacrificed all but their swords in the royal cause, were received with the coldness due to needy dependants. Too old to frisk and caper in the king's pastimes—too poor to game or dice at the king's bank—too proud to pick up the crumbs that fell from the king's table—sneered at by ushers and pages, and gravely assured by ministers that the regicides had been executed, and Oliver's remains insulted only to do them pleasure,—nothing remained for them but to retreat unhonoured to their provinces, to eat the bitter bread of humiliation for the remainder of their days.

Among these postulants for the favours of the court, Sir Richard Lovell disdained to class himself. More truly rejoiced at heart by the event of the royal restoration than those who had flung themselves into the Dover-road, or beset the ante-chambers of Westminster, to offer their gratuitous gratulations to the prince whom none of them had wagged a finger to aid in restoring to the throne of his ancestors, Sir Richard and Lady Lovell contented themselves with stimulating the slumbering loyalty of the tenantry by liberal donations, and festivities in honour of the great event. Not all the entreaties of good Mistress Corbet, now resident in London as carekeeper of the establishment of her son, could induce Lady Lovell to visit the metropolis, and witness the

splendid rejoicings of court and city;—not all the invitations of his early friends, the now Lords Anglesey and Hollis, could determine the old general to witness the triumph of the cause for which he had sacrificed so largely.

The veteran felt keenly that it was not from *them* those pressing invitations should have emanated. The smiles of Barbara Grandison, or the buffooneries of Killigrew, need not have effaced from the recollection of Charles Stuart the words wrung from him on the field of Worcester, on beholding the mangled remains of one of the best and bravest of his adherents—that "never king had lost a better subject, and that never subject's memory should be more honoured than that of the brave Lord Lovell, should fickle fortune ever again establish the throne he had fallen to defend."

"Was it for a few peevish words spoken by hot Dick Lovell in reprehension of faults that might have moved the man of Uz himself to break bounds, to efface so sacred an engagement?" cried the veteran, when discussing with young Master Shum the motives of his refrainment from court. "Nay, nay, nay! 't is not in visitation upon any error of *mine* that his Majesty disdains to show the slightest token of honour to our family. The fellow wants heart. Charles Stuart (that I should have to say as much of the Lord's anointed!) is the god of his own idolatry. Dick Lovell, and every other Lovell,

hath slipped out of his memory; and though 't is affirmed that this continued sojourn of my graceless nephew in Italy, when everything conspires to recall him to England, is on business undertaken at the king's instance, I do verily believe that the device of the sheaf of arrows (given to our house, as you may have heard, by Richard the Crusader, in gratitude for a rescue of his person, effected at peril of his life by Wilfrid the first Baron de Lovelle) hath no more favour in his sight than a cook's cleaver, or a jester's cap and bells. For five centuries, Master Shum, hath the loyalty of our line been recorded. Heralds, histories, and tombstones tell of our service to the kings of England. But 't is as well, perhaps, that the honours of the house will wither in my unfertile branch; for, as I am a Christian man, had I a son to train in the way he should go, it should be as the friend of the people, rather than as the slave of the throne."

"If I might presume to advise your worship's excellence," whispered Master Shum, looking cautiously round the steward's room of Lovell House, wherein these dangerous doctrines were broached, "I would fain remind you that the best house in the land hath eaves-droppers; and that words like these, unhandsomely repeated at Westminster——"

"Might bring down on the head of the old cavalier the same measure of vengeance which yielded to the scaffold the nobleman who at Scone did place a

kingly crown on the proscribed head of the second Charles Stuart!" cried Sir Richard Lovell. "I know it, man—I know that all record of my faithful service is as fairly evaporated as that of certain bonds for sums wasted by the king at primero at St. Germains with Rochester and Killigrew, but economized with hard self-denial by Dick Lovell out of the noble income remitted to his use by his lady niece!"

"And have you, then, no document to show for these loans?" demanded the punctilious auditor, with an air of interest.

"Had I parchments thrice engrossed and attested, I would shred them into tailors' measures rather than molest my sovereign with reminders of a debt he seems inclined to forget," cried the cavalier, twisting his grey moustache. "But, in sooth, I have not so much as the tinder that flitted from the brasier wherein I flung the bonds forced upon me in requital by the king, when, on certain propositions wherewith it is needless now to entertain you, I was moved to indignant contempt of a signature once loved and honoured as the sign-manual of my sovereign!"

"It was a rash and unadvised proceeding," observed the formal young auditor, "since, without such evidence of the credit, I fear the sums in question can never be legally recoverable."

"Who talked of recovery?" cried Sir Richard,

almost in a rage. "I spoke of this only in extenuation of my ill-blood towards this new-fangled court. The king had forgotten his obligations; and though I do not forgive his ingratitude, God witness for me, I forgive him his debt. What want I of coin? The noble creature who hath adopted me as a father, and whom I love as dearly as ever father loved a child, provideth for my wants and wishes ere I am conscious of their existence. Substance hath she, even to abounding, that I am relieved from scruple or delicacy touching acceptance. It is not in worldly gear the dear soul is wanting; and as neither the reformation of her scapegrace lord, nor her enfranchisement by divorce, is likely to be accomplished by my reconciliation with the court, no fear of old Dickon's sacrificing one tittle of his self-respect by prancing at Whitehall among the rope-dancers and led captains that grace the mummeries of the new court."

But while such were the contempts of a few staunch cavaliers, who kept aloof without being missed or sought for, hundreds and thousands of giddy-witted courtiers were not wanting to swell the pageants of Whitehall and augment the embarrassments of the king.

"What news to-day, mad wag?" demanded the Duke of Buckingham of Tom Killigrew, as he sauntered into the gallery leading to the saloon preceding his Majesty's apartment, one fine day in April of the second year following the king's restoration.

"None of any moment," replied the licensed jester of the royal circle, "saving that our Roxana, having thrown aside her palmer's weeds, is coming into bloom with the daffodils, having graced the royal supper-table last night in a suit of gold-coloured breast-knots, which tint is henceforward in her honour to be denounced 'king's yellow.'"

"'T is an ill-boding colour, if the old proverb run true!" cried Buckingham, with a contemptuous smile. "But what then? Rowley, like the man in the play, doth 'defy augury,' even as this wanton minion doth defy jealousy. But hast thou no rarer *hors d'œuvre* of scandal to supply me with appetite for the royal breakfast, to which I am bidden a guest?"

"No scandal, an 't like your grace," cried Killigrew, brushing a grain of dust from his pourpoint of scabious velvet. "'T is rather a melancholy fact than a tattling jest, that Harry Jermyn (who hath ever the fortune to inherit the cast suits of the Duke of Buckingham, whether the livery be that of Mary of Orange, or the fair and universal Shrewsbury) is like to have the colours of the latter plucked from his sleeve by no less a personage than sober Tom Howard,—a man sage and methodical in his loves as others in their devotions. But your grace will need no whet for your chocolate and pasty this morning," continued Killigrew, changing his vein when he ob-

served the duke change colour at his news. "All the evil-speaking, lying, and slandering that all the States of Italy can furnish, await you at table. Lovell arrived last night, some ten minutes after the hour of his Majesty's *petit coucher*, and is at this moment enjoying the honours of his Majesty's *petit lever*."

"Lovell!" cried Buckingham, knitting his brows with a still darker expression of displeasure. "It is true, then, that Rowley hath been in close communication with him touching the jades at Parma?"

"What jades at Parma?" demanded Killigrew with an air of surprise, that announced him less forward than the arrogant Buckingham in the secrets of his master.

"Nay, a mere purchase of Spanish jennets for the stud-house," said the Duke, striving to cover his indiscretion of speech.

"Parma, methinks, is a somewhat outlying market for a commodity that Watteville would have made it his diplomatic pride to purvey to his Majesty!" cried the cunning Tom, too shrewd to be put upon a false scent.

"His Majesty may not be minded to accept either gifts or loans tendered him by the ambassador of Spain," replied Buckingham, with ready evasion.

"Still it doth not strike me that because a Spanish branch of royalty ruleth in the duchy of Parma, its brood-mares, as well as its infants and infantas, must

necessarily partake of Spanish blood," persisted Killigrew, directing towards the countenance of Buckingham a scrutinizing glance.

"Trouble thyself no further with the pedigree of either the jennets or the princes of Parma, excellent Tom!" cried Buckingham, with an ironical smile. "*Ne sutor ultra crepidam.* Horseflesh is not the branch of learning in which thou art required to administer to the education of the court."

With all his disdains, however, the Duke of Buckingham was not sorry to have been forewarned, by the badinage of the master of the revels, of the encounter awaiting him with an individual against whom he entertained one of those pevish animosities which spring, like fungi, out of the natural dry-rot of a throne. At Breda, jealousies had arisen between them from a defeated suit, or some such courtly toy; and having secretly rejoiced at the unaccountable vagary which carried Lord Lovell post into Italy at the moment when his royal master was carried upon the shoulders of his penitent subjects into Whitehall, his grace had recently heard with regret of a renewed intercourse between Charles and his wayward favourite.

The Duke of Buckingham had means of knowing with certainty that the proposed match between Charles and Doña Caterina di Braganza,—strenuously promoted by his ally, Cardinal Mazarin, as a means by which succours might be forwarded to

Portugal without compromising the existing amity between the courts of France and Spain,—had met with vehement opposition from the Spanish party, whereof the Earl of Bristol, uncle to Lord Lovell, was a persevering upholder; and while Hyde, Ormond, Southampton, and Nicholas, concurred in forcing upon the king's acceptance the offers made by Portugal through its ambassador, De Mello, of a dower that comprehended a footing in three quarters of the globe (by the cession of Bombay in Asia, Tangier in Africa, and free trade with the Portuguese colonies in the New World), Watteville, the Spanish envoy, tendered, on the other hand, a dower of equivalent extent with the hand of one of the infantas of Parma. Buckingham had reason to suspect that the king, rendered personally averse to wedlock by the still-ascendant influence of Lady Castlemaine, and the recent birth of her son, had commissioned Lovell to discover objections against the fair fame or fair persons of the princesses of Parma, just as he had empowered others to spread rumours of the probable infertility of Doña Caterina.

Eager that such might prove the case, and prepared to bury in oblivion his former enmity, provided he found that Lovell was opposed to his uncle the earl touching the eligibility of conceding to the views of Spain, the duke assumed at once the familiarity of a boon companion, when, ere the well-frothed Barcelona chocolate was discussed, he heard Lord Lovell

frankly assert the elder infanta of Parma to be the ugliest princess of her size, and the younger the biggest of her ugliness, extant in Christian Europe.

"'T is rumoured," cried the young lord, ripe with the flippant impertinence derived from foreign travel, "that the stairs of the cathedral have been worn down an extra inch by the heavy ascents of this ponderous piece of piety, and her royal kilogrammes of 'too, too solid flesh;' while, as to her sister (under your royal pleasure, my liege, who have the happiness to call cousins with her highness), I have heard it sworn that Mignard, when employed at the court of Parma in copying Correggio's pictures for the cardinal, made sundry valuable studies from her royal hideousness, for the faces of fiends and imps in his picture of the Temptation of St. Anthony!"

"Nay!" cried Buckingham, "*I* have heard it averred that the Duchess of Parma makes excuse for the uncouthness of her progeny, by protesting that she was frightened by ——"

"Enough, enough!" exclaimed Charles. "No need to paint the devil or the infantas blacker than they are. Small persuasion is needful to determine me to adhere to my engagements with De Mello. Whatever cup we quaff from, the dose of matrimony must have its bitters; but methinks I shall swallow my physic more patiently from the high-gilded Lisbon chalice."

"Which, I pledge my George and honour, will

prove aught save a chalice of tears!" cried Buckingham gaily.

"But all this talk of wiving and wedlock must be wormwood to thine ears, friend Lovell," exclaimed the king, suddenly drawing upon the new-comer the attention of Buckingham, Lord Falmouth, and the young Earl of Arran, who formed the royal breakfast party. "I have a notion, Arthur, that nothing short of my sign-manual would have recalled thy wandering steps to a kingdom that contains thy malapert and bumpkin spouse?"

"Your Majesty is ever happy in your guesses," replied Lovell, his cheek flushing with mortification at finding his private affairs thus exposed to comment. "The words 'native country' have a tender and majestic sound; but when applied to a country containing within its limits no foot of earth we can call our own, and some five feet five of wife we could willingly call some other man's, i'faith the temptation to look upon its face is somewhat of the slightest!—I beseech your Majesty, however, to believe that I have been crying 'God save the king!' for the last two years, with strength of lungs to be heard from Messina to Whitehall; and that nothing but virulency of wife-hatred could have surmounted my desire to breathe the same ejaculation less audibly, but not less fervently, at your feet."

"*Wife*-hatred!" exclaimed the Duke of Buckingham, greatly surprised. "Have I the sorrow to

behold in Lord Lovell another *martyre de par l'église?*"

"Married? and how long, pray, my dear Lovell?" demanded the Earl of Arran, equally astonished.

"Somewhere as long as the besiegement of Troy, if my memory serve me," interrupted the king.

"Ten years! Why, you must have usurped the privilege of royalty, and been noosed in leading-strings!" cried the Duke of Buckingham, casting an envious glance upon the handsome person of the young lord.

"And, now I remember me, you may even add two more to the cipher," resumed the king. "The match was made on the eve of Wor'ster (was 't not, my dear lord?), where my friend's good service savoured little of leading-strings, though some year or two younger than the boyish and inexperienced prince he defended at the hazard of his life."

"Your Majesty's memory, like a poetical dedication, embellisheth my poor deserts," said Lord Lovell, deeply touched by these proofs of recollection on the part of one the great fault of whose easy nature was unimpressibility.

"Married twelve heinous years, yet still retain that enviable freshness of complexion and evenness of brow!" exclaimed the flaunting Buckingham. "A blessed encouragement for the laudable designs of your Majesty!"

"Away with ye, George!" cried the king with a

hearty laugh. "Oddsfish! I would not hesitate to wed with all the infantas of Spain, Portugal, and Parma (with De Watteville's *protégée*, the red-headed Princess of Denmark, to boot), so I might enjoy the connubial estate on the same free and easy terms upon which my friend Lovell yonder hath played the Benedict."

"So, so, so!" replied the duke, with awakened curiosity. "Have I then a lesson to learn in the art of ingenious deconjugation? Never did it enter into my simple conjectures at Paris, Cologne, or Breda, that the modes or mien of my young Lord Lovell were those of a married man."

"*Un homme est fils de ses œuvres!*" replied Lovell, with a sneer. "My alliance was none of my own doing;—*ergo* I am, *de facto*, by no means a married man. I hold it doubly hard, moreover, that my Shropshire lands,—mine from a dozen generations,—should become escheated by my banishment, and fall to the maw of such cormorants as Whalley and Pryme; while my wife, who, as part of my goods and chattels, ought to have been also an escheat, seemed strapped to my shoulders everlastingly, without chance or hope of riddance."

"And what is become of my old Wor'ster friend, Sir Richard?" demanded the king, in an embarrassed manner, of Lord Lovell.

"I should rather put that question to your Majesty," he replied; "seeing that, as he hath ever

chosen to side with my crocodile of a wife, I have long discarded him as an uncle. I trust your Majesty may not have discarded him as a subject; but 't is some years since I heard mention of his name."

"Then I should say that the old fellow was gone dead!" cried the king, swallowing at a snap a *bouchée aux huîtres*, much as one of the spaniels at his side would have swallowed a fly; "or I should most assuredly have distinguished his rubicund face among the legion of musty cavalier visages that for twelve months after my accession beset the court. Thou wert a lucky knave, Lovell, to be spared the spectacle and sound of 'I that fought with your Majesty!' 'I that bled for your Majesty!' 'I that forfeited my lands!' 'I that lost a leg!' 'I, an arm!' 'I, everything in the world!' Heaven save them!—not so much as the loyal old gentlewoman, who had been at the pains of preserving the currycombs and leathers used in the royal stables of my late gracious father of blessed memory, but came down upon me with claims for pensions and indemnification! I who, God wot, had debts enough of my own upon my hands, was modestly requested to discharge the debts of some millions of my subjects!"

"'T is to old Dick Lovell's credit that he disdained to make one of this ragged regiment," said Lord Lovell, coldly.

"We were on none of the smoothest terms on parting at Paris," cried the king. "The old knight,

when in good humour, used to fight me over that skirmish at Madeley Bridge, till it became my Bridge of Sighs, and, when in ill humour, never ceased from reprehending me for keeping loose company, in the guise of Mistress Lucy of virago memory, and his own still more graceless nephew."

"I thank his kinsmanly affection!" ejaculated the young lord, with a sneer. "I have asked none of his news these five years past; and if I sometimes take occasion to inquire touching the health of my mawkin of a wife, 't is with a view to my personal deliverance. I have hopes afforded me, however, by the doctors of Bologna (to whom t'other day I submitted translated copies of the deeds by which her meek-mouthed Barabbas of a father and his crop-eared attorney finessed me out of my Northamptonshire estates), that the bond may yet be broken."

"Northamptonshire!" exclaimed the young Earl of Arran, with a start that all but dislodged the rosewater of his *rince-bouche* into the yawning morocco boot of the Duke of Buckingham, beside whom he was seated. "Does your lordship mean that the 'mawkin,' 'bumpkin,' and what other opprobrious names you have assigned to your lady-wife, can be the self-same lovely Lady Lovell of Lovell House, by Thrapstone, whose charms have set the midland counties into a ferment?"

"I confess to Lovell House and Thrapstone," replied his lordship; "of the ferment I know nothing

more than is reported by the gallantry of my Lord Arran."

"Impart, impart, Dick!" cried Charles, eagerly addressing the earl. "What canst tell us concerning Lovell's Elfrida? Hast seen her? Pr'ythee, what knowest thou of her by person or renown?"

"By both, wonders, my gracious liege! Lady Lovell's renown is that of the most beauteous, most beneficent, most prudent of her sex. For her person, I would, sire, you had been present when I beheld it for the first time!"

"Ay," cried the king, in a tone of interest, encouraging him to further disclosure.

"It happened," resumed Lord Arran, "that soon after the marriage of my sister with Chesterfield, I was proceeding post to Bretby on a visit of congratulation, when, having taken my rest at a villanous country inn, whereunto the unsavouriness of a Spanish *posada* were a bouquet, I was proceeding by a short cut across the country, per counsel communicated to my grooms by the filthy Boniface by whom I had been entertained, poisoned, and robbed on the king's highway, when, lo! as I entered certain pastures of a plain betwixt Thrapstone and Arundel, there came upon me a train of gentles with greyhounds in leash, and a sufficient array of mounted serving-men to assure me of the quality of the party. A hearty-looking young country gentleman was at its head who doffed his beaver courteously in passing. Then

came a pretty blushing thing, in a sad-coloured riding-suit; and lastly, a fair creature, mounted on a thorough-bred mare, as black as jet, in the highest condition, and with a cross of the Arabian——"

"Curse the mare!—The lady, the lady!" cried King Charles, really interested in the narrative.

"The lady, sire, habited in a velvet skirt of Lincoln green, with a sable riding-hat and feather, which, as her impatient mare pressed on, streamed wildly in the wind, was in person and bearing all that your Majesty can conjecture of the fair Hippolyta, when side by side with Theseus."

"Tut, man! My majesty can conjecture no such apocryphal divinity," cried Rowley, impatiently. "Describe her, with your leave, in unmetaphorical flesh and blood."

"Figure to yourself, then, sire, the bloom of my sister Chesterfield,—the liquid glances of my Lady Shrewsbury,—the fine bust and shoulders of fair Mistress Palmer,—the graceful dignity of her royal highness the Duchess,—the freshness of Mistress Robartes,—the——"

"On my royal word, I'll do no such thing!" cried Charles. "The very surmise of such an angel on horseback would carry me straight down a-coursing to the good shire of Northampton, against which Fotheringay Castle and the fate of my fair great-grandame inspire me with an ugly prejudice."

"The face of the young Lady Lovell, my liege,

would obliterate impressions twice as gloomy!" cried Arran, with enthusiasm.

"And you are satisfied, of a surety, that this said young Lady Lovell is no other than the wife of his sullen lordship there?"

"I am certain only, sire, that the lady is resident at Lovell House. More I would fain have learned of her; but my brother Chesterfield (who is an occasional visitor at Laxton, within reach of her domicile) informed me that she was a lady of rare merit, who, on family troubles arising out of the civil wars, chose to live in strict seclusion. Above all, he protested that a giddy-pated courtier like myself (as the earl was ungraciously pleased to define me) would find no favour in her sight."

"Umph! Methinks the adventure might have been worth the attempting!" said Buckingham, coolly.

"My life on't, it had been tried in vain!" cried Lovell, reddening. "This woman hath neither heart nor soul, but simply a fair body inspired by the very incarnate demon of obstinacy."

"With your lordship's good leave, no woman is conscious of having heart or soul till she is taught; and, *sans vous offenser*, if I rightly disentangle this very confused romance—beginning, where romances usually end, with a marriage—Lady Lovell hath been spared all indications likely to develope the latent tenderness of woman's nature."

"I had as lief labour to infuse tenderness into an iceberg or a haystack, as to a woman drilled, *bongré malgré*, into wedlock by the manœuvres of a doating father!" cried Lovell, waxing more and more irritable under their bantering.

"Ay, if the dad were to *share* the education of the damsel!" persisted Buckingham, provokingly. "But when the lady presents so fair an apology for the family fault ——"

"So handsome an excuse," added Arran.

"I should *then* be of opinion ——"

"My lord of Buckingham, so dainty that scarcely less than a royal shrine is supposed to merit his devotions," interrupted Lovell, "would, I imagine, be the last man in England to desire that the heirs of his name should have to call a Leicestershire grazier grandsire."

"Faith! so their right was established to call *me* father, I should scarcely look beyond!" cried the incorrigible duke. "And I have only to entreat, my lord, that (my duchess waxing infirm), should you ever put away this peerless and injured fair one by legal repudiation, you will give me timely notice; that I may be one of the first to inscribe myself on the list for a chance of becoming your lordship's successor."

"Book yourself then to-morrow, by all means!" cried Lovell, already heated with the Spanish wines, which, towards the close of the breakfast, had been

liberally imbibed by the party; "for it is my intention, my lord, to betake myself instanter to the Court of Arches for all the succours which law or church can yield to annul this incomplete marriage."

"What if I summon the lady to court, and use my best eloquence in persuading her to lend amicable aid towards the furtherance of the suit?" demanded the king, jocosely. "'T is little to be doubted, Love, (if I may still honour thee with a *sobriquet* which thou so grievously beliest), that the lady is, no less than the lord, desirous of release."

"Unless the caprice of woman's nature hath operated a change in her ladyship's views since the old knight joined us in Paris, full of the wonders of her magnanimity in having redeemed him from the bondage of the Philistines, and sworn to live and die a virgin bride, there is no hope that even your Majesty's powers of persuasion will work the miracle," replied his lordship, carelessly.

"Nevertheless I would fain hazard the attempt," said the king, eyeing his favourite with half-maudlin derision. "It were poetical justice that, in requital for you ridding me of the infauta of Parma, I released ye from the iron bondage of lawful wedlock."

"I must still presume to doubt the efficacy of your Majesty's intervention. The royal touch may work a cure for the evil," quoth Lovell; "but I find it nowhere set down that it yields relief to the sore disease called matrimony."

"Meanwhile I challenge the trial," cried the merry monarch. "Who knows but it may discover to me a hitherto unsuspected prerogative of the crown?"

"No difficulty in raising pretexts for citing the lady to appear at Westminster!" exclaimed the Duke of Buckingham. "In these days of sequestration and committees of inquiry into sequestration,—of land-taxing and hearth-taxing,—it will go hard but my lord commissioners may make or find some tangle for disputation, excusing a subpœna."

"If I know her, she will not come!" cried Lord Lovell, tinkling the jewel of the order of the Golden Spur, appended to his cloak, in manifest vexation.

"A thousand pistoles that she will!" cried Buckingham. "So mettlesome and Amazonian a beauty cannot but jump at a pretext for visiting the court. Nay, citation and subpœna apart, I double my stake that, per force of polite rhetoric, charged only with a gracious message from our liege the king (whose messages, even to his obstreperous commons, are ever gracious), I will make my way into Lady Lovell's enchanted castle, and allure her, within six days' space, to Whitehall."

"A bet—a bet!" cried Arran, as the king, by rising from table, gave the signal for breaking up the party.

"With all my soul!" retorted Lovell, dizzy with

the unaccustomed strength of the sherris sack he had unwittingly swallowed.

"I have your lordship's permission, then, to dare the adventure?"

"*Permission!* My very best wishes towards your success!" cried Lovell, with emphasis.

"Cousin of Buckingham, be not too bold," cried the king, setting his wig and pourpoint in order, before he proceeded to the council-chamber.

"'Be bold, be bold, and yet again be bold!'" quoted Lord Arran, in Spenserian strain. "Bring but to Hyde Park the lady of the black mare, and I promise you that all existing countesses and duchesses shall hide their diminished heads."

"*Au revoir*, then," said the king, kissing his finger-tips *à l'Italienne* to his noisy companions. "A week hence, my lords, we meet here to decide the wager."

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLE suspecting the existence of a plot against her peace, still less imagining the return to England of one who had long announced, like Bertram in the play, that "till he had no wife, he had nothing in" his own country, happy and happy-making, cheerful as Innocence and beautiful as Truth, Lady Lovell was enjoying, at Lovell House, the brightness of the opening spring.

One day, roused from her slumbers by the reveillée of the hunting-horn and the mellow voice of the jolly old knight calling upon her to rise and accoutre; the next, renouncing her sweeping skirts for the tucked-up garments of the forester, she loved to follow Enoch Shum and his train of woodsmen, marking with her own fair hand the clearings she selected to afford vistas for the embellishment of the estate; a third day, the formal young steward attended her with plans, pencils, and compasses, taking orders for

the new plantations destined for the benefit of that far-off posterity in which Lady Lovell possessed no more than a philanthropic interest; while, on a fourth, she was to be seen in the pleasure-grounds, directing, with sparkling eye and glowing cheek, the sowing of the summer seeds, the raising of new bowers, and the pruning of old arbours—resisting only, as in previous years, the proposals of her new-fangled gardeners for the embellishment of a certain terrace which, they protested, was a defeature to the place.

"Let neither stone nor plant be displaced," was ever her reply. "Be the old quince tree looked to, lest its roots be injured by penetrating towards the water; and have the hedge of honeysuckle and sweet brier carefully trimmed. But, beyond such entertainment, see that ye lay not a finger on the old terrace."

It was, moreover, a noted thing in the establishment, that when my lady betook herself to her daily promenade on that uninviting spot, none were to approach her with molestation. Young Mistress Shum, a gentle but gay and happy creature, whose company and affections were highly valued by her patroness, never intruded there, though privileged, she and her two fair babes, to approach with the freedom of friendship in all other times and places; nay, even Sir Richard — the joyous, daring, bantering, unforbearing Sir Richard — would turn away and

betake himself to the lawn or the shrubberies, if he beheld his fair niece direct her steps towards a spot which observation of the changes of her countenance assured him was consecrated to memories of the past.

So well was all this understood in the household, that Lady Lovell was startled with surprise,—almost with displeasure,—when, one glittering afternoon in April, as she was inhaling the early fragrance of the brier-buds, and admiring that, while the woods were still gloomy and unclothed, her favourite spot was already green with the hardy shoots of the woodbine hedge, she saw advancing to meet her from the house her favourite page Edmund, the grandson of that dear old nurse who, as well as the venerable Gervas, now rested from her labours.

"May it please your ladyship," the boy began.

"It doth *not* please me, Edmy, that you should so disregard my wishes as interrupt my walk," interrupted the lovely lady, attempting to frown. "The terrace is a forbidden spot."

"I know it well, madam," replied the boy; "but Master Shum, though unwilling to break in upon your ladyship's walk, thought it right you should be instantly apprised that a great lord from court was alighting with his train at the gate."

"Where is the general?" cried Lady Lovell, turning very pale. "Hie instantly to the fort, and entreat Sir Richard to visit me without delay"

"It were a bootless errand, madam," replied Ed-

mund. "Your ladyship may remember that Sir Richard set off two hours ago for Oakham, to visit, as I believe, with Master Wright, your ladyship's farms in Rutland."

"'T is true, 't is true!" cried Lady Lovell, growing more and more confused. "That I should have chosen such a moment of all the year to claim such service of my good uncle!"

"May it please your ladyship," resumed the boy, gaining courage from her embarrassment, "I heard one of the saucy grooms yonder, who escorted the coach of the stranger lord, cry aloud with an oath to his mates, that 't was a fitting thing, truly, no greater respect was shown by a horde of Northamptonshire bumpkins to the retinue of the great Duke of Buckingham."

"*Buckingham!*" ejaculated Lady Anne, who, at the moment of the boy's communication, was directing her steps towards the house; "art sure the fellow said the Duke of *Buckingham?*"

And on receiving confirmation, from Edmund's account of the bearings and liveries of the equipage, that her visitor was no other than the man notorious for his excesses and insolence, she determined on regaining the house by a by-path branching from the foot of the terrace. Bidding Edmund return by the grand entrance, and despatch Master Shum to her dressing-room, she hastened her footsteps homeward.

On reaching her chamber, Lady Lovell found that her kind friend Hope had already summoned her tirewoman to provide a change of dress.

"Your ladyship will wear the tunic of pearl-colour satin, which was made for Sir Richard's last birthday?" demanded Judith, the elder of her maids.

"And the pinners of Alençon lace?" added Margery, the younger waiting-woman. "Or will your ladyship give me time to arrange your hair with pearls? The wind hath sadly discomposed the curls."

"For what, pray, am I to make all these splendid preparations?" demanded Lady Lovell, with a smile. "Away with ye both! Hasten to Thomas Cellerer and Antony Cook, with my commands that nothing the house can afford be spared in serving up a collation as quickly as possible in the grand eating-chamber."

"But you will not surely give audience to the Duke of Buckingham in this unseemly trim?" inquired Hope, mortified at the thought that her young lady should not be seen to the best advantage.

"If the Duke of Buckingham purpose to tarry at Lovell House till he obtain audience of *me*, his visit is like to be of inconvenient duration," replied Lady Lovell. "Ha! my good friend," cried she, turning towards Master Shum, who at that moment made his appearance in his full-bottom wig and black

velvet suit of ceremony, in which he maintained a most respectable and professional appearance, "I pray you, wait in my name upon the unexpected guest who hath dropped upon us from the skies. Acquaint him that the Lady Lovell receiveth no visitors, and hath delegated *you* to learn from his lips the purport of his coming."

"I greatly fear, madam, that this will scarcely be esteemed a courteous, still less a hospitable reception," replied the auditor.

"It is my intention to accord no other," replied Lady Lovell, in a tone which Master Shum perfectly understood to be decisive; and bowing respectfully, he withdrew to fulfil her commission.

"Thy husband, dearest Hope, is beginning to comprehend the peremptory nature of thy friend!" observed her ladyship, drawing down Mistress Shum to a place beside her on the settee.

"Your ladyship well knows that Enoch is anxious to act only for your honour and advantage."

"Had he persisted in forwarding my honour and advantage by advocating an interview with this parlous Duke of Bucks," cried Lady Lovell, recovering her spirits now that she found herself secure in the stronghold of her own chamber, "I would have requited his sauciness, and promoted his own honour and advantage, by insisting that his pretty wife should bear me company in the audience."

"And why not, madam?" inquired the simple-

minded young woman, reared in modest puritanism, and unversed in that gossip of foreign courts which, in spite of her endeavours, the old general chose occasionally to bestow on his niece.

"Ay, why not, indeed!" cried Lady Lovell, not choosing to enlighten her mind with a sketch of the character and pursuits of the Duke of Bucks; and it was a relief that Judith at that moment returned, panting with inquiries touching the disposal of his grace's retinue. "At what table was my lord's gentleman of the presence to dine?—at what table his ushers and pages?"

"This is coming down upon us like an ambassador indeed!" cried Lady Lovell, with a smile. "'Tis well if Robin Forrester have venison enough at his lodge to make out a fitting entertainment. Your dovecot and poultry-yard, my dear Hope, are, I know, never to be taken at a disadvantage, even by a knight who brings us, like the patriarchs of old, his whole household at his back."

But while Judith and Mistress Shum were discussing the arrangements to be made, the grave spouse of the latter reappeared, to communicate with an air of deep deference to his lady, that "the Duke of Buckingham was bearer of a message from the king, which regarded her private ear."

"Have the goodness to explain to his grace," replied Anne, with a harassed look, "that my private ear regardeth my private friends. His Majesty has

delegated the duke to signify his pleasure to me,—I select *you* to receive the signification."

"In the absence of better counsellors, such as the general and my uncle Wright, I presume, madam, to observe to you," said the auditor timidly, "that such marked disrespect towards the representative of the king will excite universal disapproval. If his Majesty's message, for instance, should relate to some law process in contemplation against the title of your ladyship's estate——"

"Thou dreamest of nothing but processes and estates!" cried Lady Lovell, with a smile. "Be assured that were the affair of a legal nature, it would have been communicated to me through a common pursuivant-at-arms, on a skin of parchment, having the great seal of England appended to the corner, lest peradventure any one of the fifty hungry officials having fees to claim upon the deed should be defrauded of his perquisites. No, no! to interpret the errand from the bearer thereof, his Majesty hath rather some idle project in hand, the report of which is to be despatched to Italy for the diversion of Sir Richard's nephew. I pray you, therefore, sir, to do my pleasure."

The Duke of Buckingham, meanwhile, who had undertaken the adventure in the mere wantonness of a festive hour, to thwart Lord Lovell, of whose rivalship in the favour of the king he stood somewhat in awe, was now stimulated, by all he had heard and seen

at Lovell House, to a deeper interest in the business than the winning of his wager. He had prepared himself for the heavy humdrum rusticity of a country seat and country madam, curtseying obsequiously at the first intimation of his arrival; and the proud independence of Lady Lovell commanded his respect. There was something in the very mansion and its ordering singularly accordant with his tastes, which hitherto in such matters he had esteemed transcendent. Ushered through the suite of state apartments, hung with brocade richly panelled in scroll-work of white and gold, he was at liberty, during the period of Master Shum's negotiations, to penetrate through the grand saloon into a chamber which was evidently the favourite retreat of the lady of Lovell House.

A small bookcase, recessed in the wall, contained exactly the selection, in several languages, of the poets and essayists he loved to make the recreation of his leisure. In an agate cup, upon a marble table, was a single spray of a rare exotic of singular beauty. On a bracket nearer the silken lounging chair, stood a tapestry frame, the half-finished embroidery in which was such as he had never seen arise under the nimble Parisian fingers, with whose fairy labours he had been recently familiar;—and beside it, a pencil and sketch-book, filled with studies from nature, and *croquis* of the most piquant description, each bearing the initials of A. L.

"Truly a dainty bower-chamber for the rantipole Blowzabelle described by Arran!" muttered his grace on a first survey of the little sanctum. But ere he had stood five minutes upon its hallowed ground, the cause of Lady Lovell was sanctified and embalmed by the poetical atmosphere of the spot. "This is the retreat of no ordinary mind," was his secondary reflection; and by the time Master Shum came to deliver the message from his lady, Buckingham had begun to regard an interview with the coy beauty as essential to his happiness.

"My Lady Lovell prays you will partake of the hospitality of her poor roof until your grace's horses and retinue are rested," observed the auditor, with a respectful obeisance. "Her ladyship is grieved to understand that the Duke of Buckingham should have breathed his horses at Thrapstone, after pausing for the night at Wrest Park; but trusts that, after communicating to myself (her agent-at-law) the message of his Majesty, he will condescend to accept a collation here ere he retraceth his route."

"Now, out upon this woman and her smooth-spoken agent-at-law!" was Buckingham's secret reflection on receiving an intimation so worded as clearly to express Lady Lovell's cognizance that short baiting-time was necessary to enable the noble traveller to resume his journey. All, however, that he overtly expressed, was a cheerful acceptance of the latter part of the proposal, trusting that, in the

course of the banquet, his hostess might be mollified by a sense of the duties of hospitality, or moved by feminine curiosity, to accord him an interview. While the table was preparing, Master Shum, with the established ceremony of country breeding, proposed to the noble visitor to visit the French garden, the pheasantry and apiary, which were esteemed curious in the neighbourhood; and Buckingham, fresh from the glorious gardens of France and Holland — St. Germain en Laye. Fontainebleau, the Louvre, the Hague—found himself in politeness bound to saunter by the side of the precise Enoch from parterre to parterre, praising fountains which he regarded as threads, and parterres which were as vulgar in his eyes as a judge's posy.

Nevertheless, being persuaded that both the Lady Lovell and a certain fair damsel, of whom he had caught a glimpse on crossing the great hall, and little suspected to be the spouse of the steeple-crowned and solemn gentleman by his side, were slily peeping from the windows to take a survey of an animal so rare in Northamptonshire as a courtier from Whitehall, he demeaned himself with the most courtier-like urbanity. Alack! poor gentleman. His airs of dignity had no worthier spectator than Lady Lovell's favourite spaniel, which went whiffing at his grace's heels, as if trying to make out the meaning of so unusual a display of laces and ribands, and such vapours of musk and frangipanni!

It was fated that the gallant duke should receive rather than create agreeable impressions. On reaching the doors of the great banqueting-chamber, where a splendid collation had been hastily set forth, his grace was startled by a concert of French horns, such as he had never yet heard save in the establishment of the Duc de Vendome, *Grand Veneur de France;* nor did the triumphant Enoch think it necessary to diminish the charm by informing him that four of her ladyship's prickers had been instructed in the art by General Lovell, who had perfected himself as an amateur in the school of the Grand Veneur It had been Lady Lovell's charge to Master Shum that the name of Sir Richard should not be pronounced in presence of the duke; and so strictly was he in the habit of obeying his lady's commands, that when Buckingham, in the course of his morning saunter, struck by the elegant simplicity of the sylvan lodge, made careless inquiries touching its destination, the auditor could find no better reply wherewith to parry the interrogatory than,—"The lodge was built, so please your grace, after a special design of my Lady Lovell, as a residence for—for—an officer—a cavalier—a gentleman of high honour and account, whom her ladyship did not hold it expedient to lodge ostensibly at Lovell House."

"But who *resides* at yonder rustic pavilion?"

"Who resides yonder at the rustic pavilion?"

Had Enoch Shum been an interpreter of visages,

he might have perceived how, from that moment, the countenance of the Duke of Buckingham began to brighten; all was now explained. The lady's seclusion, his own *ex*clusion, and the *con*fusion of the steward under his questioning! He freely forgave her *now* the ungraciousness of her reception! This cavalier paramour might be some jealous susceptible Drawcansir, whose chastisement she dared not provoke. Nay! he forgave her even the loss of his wager; for the news he was about to bear to court touching this Lucretia of Northampton would prove more mortifying to the malapert Lovell than the failure of his bet.

It was this sudden accession of good-humour, perhaps, which caused his grace to estimate so highly the reveillée of the *cors de chasse*, and to whisper within himself that Chiffinch's *petit couvert* at Whitehall was not more appetizingly served than the viands of my Lord Lovell's bumpkin wife.

"On my soul!" cried he, after tasting a truffled pheasant *pâté à la financière*, a favourite dish with Sir Richard, whose most trifling whims were studied by his niece,—"I passed two days last hunting season at Chantilly, and Vatel himself produced nothing more purely and exquisitely *giboyé* than this *pâté!*"

The wine was equally to his taste. There were Spanish wines of great age, brought over in the latter years of Elizabeth's reign, when a Lord Lovell repre-

sented the British court at the Escurial; besides French wines of every kind, recently provided to gratify the palate of the old general, so long accustomed to the light and sparkling vintages of France.

"My message, good sir, is half answered already, without so much as speech of your invisible lady," cried Buckingham, behind whose chair Master Shum had made a motion to wait, which was instantly negatived by the high breeding of the guest. "I came hither charged by his Majesty to express to the Lady Lovell his earnest hope that one so fitted by birth, fortune, beauty, and accomplishments to do honour to his court, would not longer continue to seclude herself in homely retirement, but deign to accept some post of honour in the establishment about to be formed for our expected queen."

"The happy news is authentic, then, my lord, of his gracious Majesty's marriage?" cried Shum, interrupting him.

"True as the Talmud, Alcoran, Gospel,—or whatever other code, most worshipful sir, may happen to command your faith!" cried Buckingham, with a sneer. "But (if I may be permitted to continue my exposition) I am already cognizant of the unlikelihood that your lady will be moved to stoop to so uncouth a household as the royal sty at Whitehall. Betwixt ourselves, Rowley's cooks are mere *gargotiers* compared with the *cordon bleu* entertained by her ladyship; and for plate, saving a few wretched

platters, salvers, and flagons for his Majesty's private buffets, pewter is the richest metal that graceth the royal banquets! The crown cupboard found its way with the crown jewels to the Hague, in the pouch of the gracious queen-mother, some fifteen years agone, to be changed into ducats and doubloons; and God send our pragmatical gentry of the parliament may ever find grace to repair the loss by a sufficient grant! The varlets maintain that a good haunch eats more savourily off the baser metal. *They* to set up for judges, who have evermore dieted on wether-mutton served upon trenchers, washed down by black jacks of ale! I crave, fair sir, another glass of the choice Malvoisie with which you just now favoured me, to efface the filthy notion from my palate."

"Your grace (pardon me) is wholly in error!" cried the auditor, with rising warmth. "Permit me to declare that my Lady Lovell is as indifferent to creature comforts as though by profession belonging to the Presbyterian church. Her ladyship's mind——"

"Is fair as her ladyship's body, and doubtless a mirror for the reflection of soberness, temperance, and chastity!" interrupted Buckingham. "Granted, —unheard and uncared for! Since the death of Elizabeth the Prudish, I am convinced that so peerless a dame never set the lances of chivalry in rest. Nevertheless, I must still take upon myself to

believe that the elegant luxuriousness of Lovell House would ill prepare her for the disorderly *masquineries* of the royal household."

"Luxuriousness, my lord, is a word scarcely applicable to a lady of my noble mistress's active and self-denying habits;—a lady whose draught is evermore of pure spring water,—the hangings of whose chamber are of simplest linen, while every other apartment here is rich in velvet or brocade;—who, winter or summer, riseth with the sun, and is galloping over hill and dale while others are yawning away the morning in lounging chairs, discoursing scandal with their dainty mates."

"Of the nature of her ladyship's potations (as she declines to do me the courtesy of a pledge) I pretend not to judge," replied Buckingham, with ironical solemnity. "To the hangings of her apartment—less fortunate than yourself, worthy sir—I am equally unable to bear testimony. And with respect to her horse-coursing, hawking, hunting, and other truly feminine pursuits, I am no further qualified to bear witness for my mission to Northampton, than I was to defend her ladyship when these propensities were lately pithily described at Whitehall for the diversion of his Majesty. I held it at the time a romantic project on the part of Rowley to dream of attracting so buxom a peeress to his court! Yet was he in gallantry bound to attempt the civilization of a lady reputed so fair; and in taking

my leave of Lovell House, as the sinking sun yonder warns me it is time to do, I feel that I shall have the reproaches of the king to add to my own regrets at proving a disgraced ambassador,—dismissed without an audience."

"With your grace's permission, I will once more attempt to move the spirit of my noble lady!" cried Shum, stumbling towards the door in the earnestness of his desire to exonerate his beloved lady from the ignominious charges circulated against her at court. "I trust I may even now persuade her to receive your grace's parting salutations."

"And hark ye, friend," cried Buckingham, resting his ruffled boot on an adjoining chair, and swallowing a fragment of chocolate macaroon as a zest to his glass of Rivesaltes, "should her ladyship prove obdurate, after the approved fashion of country-gentlewomen, beseech her to despatch hither as proxy a certain pretty little article in a sad-coloured gown and starched pinners, a vision of whose blue eyes greeted me on my entrance. For want of the mistress, I will allow myself to abide by the maid."

Fortunately, Master Shum had retreated without hearing or understanding this unseemly allusion to his fair and modest helpmate, or his pleading to Lady Lovell to rescind her determination might possibly have been less zealous. Nevertheless, when he beheld her seated in a simple undress in her own apartment, wearying, with a book in her hand, till

the departure of her troublesome guest should place her once more at liberty, he perceived in a moment that he might as well attempt to uproot Mountsorrel as deter her from her purpose of seclusion.

It scarcely surprised him when, on crossing the hall on his return to the banqueting-room, he perceived that on a private command despatched by Lady Lovell to the stables, the equipage and people of the Duke of Buckingham were already in attendance, as the duke must needs perceive from the bay-windows of the chamber in which he sat; and expecting, in his country breeding, that his grace would be indignant and resentful at so flagrant a breach of courtesy, he was amazed to find the duke, beaver in hand, prepared for instant departure, and pouring forth, with smiling volubility, expressions of regret that it would be impossible for him to protract his stay sufficiently to accept an audience of Lady Lovell.

"I have only this moment become aware of the lateness of the hour," cried he, with an air of insolent superiority. "I fancied that your country clocks were as much behindhand as everything else in the country. Nay," he continued, following Master Shum's glance towards the setting sun, "I was idiot enough to surmise that the sun went slower here than elsewhere. I shall therefore pray you to commend me to the Lady Lovell, assuring her of due report to his Majesty of the splendour and favour with which his messengers are entertained, and an

intimation of her ladyship's humble sense of unworthiness of the honour designed her."

"But, my lord duke," interrupted Shum——

"Leave it to *my* care, excellent sir," cried Buckingham, waving his hand. "To garnish the message with those common forms of politeness in which your province is supposed to be deficient. *Foi de chevalier*, *Monsieur l'Auditeur*, though my absence from Whitehall will have been but of forty-eight hours' duration, I shall make it a duty to go through a course of *douches* and fumigations at the hands of my French *baigneur*, ere I present myself in his Majesty's presence, lest the bumpkin atmosphere should adhere to my garments, and discredit me in the eyes of the decent class of the community. Farewell, sir! Not a step further, I beseech ye!" and crossing the hall with an easy picktooth gait which left Master Shum in open-mouthed amazement at his *sang-froid*, he tossed a purse of gold pieces to the page as vails for the household, which, according to the custom of the times, would have been freely accepted but for the established regulations of Lovell House.

"Send it as alms, then, to the parish church!" cried Buckingham, with a scornful smile; when, to his amazement, the old steward advanced to the portal of the courtier's painted coach, and requested him to resume a gift which was contrary to the forms of the house. "Since the customs of civilization do

not yet obtain here, it is to be hoped that your beggars have still the grace to be thankful."

"We have *no* beggars hereabouts, my lord duke," replied the old man, tossing the purse to the duke's groom of the chambers, much as it had been thrown by the duke to little Edmund. And the glass being that instant indignantly drawn up by Buckingham in the face of the presumptous menial, a signal was given to the *cortège* to proceed.

Glancing back at the old mansion, as a turn towards the lodge-gates brought him once more within view of the house, the duke was astonished to perceive that, instead of the rustic household bursting forth from the porch to stare upon the departing train of carriages, which displayed a degree of magnificence at that period rarely witnessed beyond the limits of the capital, not so much as a groom or chambermaid was at the trouble to play spectator. There was not a single consolatory circumstance by which his wounded vanity could be appeased.

"The devil fetch this untaught wench!" cried he, as he mused sullenly in a corner of his unwieldy carriage. "Though it goes against me to take up the gauntlet she has presumed to throw down, my honour is concerned in bringing her to shame! Let her look to it! Never did man or woman provoke with impunity the vengeance of a Villiers."

CHAPTER XIII.

Labour lost were the ponderings of the Duke of Bucks on his way back to London, concerning the most plausible pretexts to be assigned for his defeat! Whether his wager were paid with a swaggering air of inuendo, or a frank avowal of the truth, mattered not a grain of the dust raised by his gilded wheels. By the time he arrived at Whitehall, not a living soul save Lord Lovell bore recollection of the bet, Arran being engrossed by the loss of an old mistress, and Rowley by the impending arrival of a new wife! A schooner, despatched by the Earl of Sandwich from Lisbon, had arrived at Spithead, announcing that the English fleet, after receiving from the Portuguese the cession of Tangier as part of the portion of Doña Caterina, had sailed from the Tagus with the future Queen of England!

What a turmoil at court! From day to day the princess might be expected on the coast! Mistress

Palmer in hysterics on one side, Watteville in the sullens on the other; the chancellor labouring to preserve such equanimity of countenance as might prove to the nation that he had not abetted the match with a Catholic princess, and to Mazarin that he did not oppose it; while not a woman of quality from Temple Bar to Whitehall,—nay, from Westminster to Berwick-upon-Tweed,—but was caballing to obtain some post of honour in the new household. Every morning the printed playbills, laid by royal command upon the breakfast-table of the king, were accompanied by perfumed packets, marked "particularly private," or "eminently confidential," containing powerful appeals to his protection from duchesses, countesses, viscountesses, and damsels of honour, setting forth that there was no life or satisfaction for them on earth, unless they could obtain the blessed privilege of being cooped up in a chamber six feet square, at Whitehall or Richmond; of figuring in the royal coaches and the court calendar, as mistress of the robes, bedchamber woman, or maid of honour So malapert in their own households, so indolent in their personal habits, that at home they must needs entertain pages to fan the summer midges from their cheek, these pretty coveters of the glare and gauds of life would hear of nothing but making menials of themselves, so that the magniloquent term salary were substituted for the ignominious word wages. They were ready to air linen, pick up fans, carry

handkerchiefs, and comb lapdogs, for the untold beatitude of being proclaimed as of the court, courtly.

"'Satan sends the breeze that blows good to no man!' quoth the proverb," said Buckingham as, gathering up a handful of similar applications, he proceeded to the breakfast appointed for rendering an account of his adventure. "I have despatched to Lovell his sack of two thousand pistoles; and instead of having to appear in presence with pendent ears and hanging tail, like one of Rowley's spaniels after being whipped for picking and stealing, I shall enter, radiant with triumph, as having avoided to encumber the memoranda of royal promises with the name of a hundred-and-fourteenth lady of the bedchamber. My life on 't, I am thanked rather than bantered for my mischances! Rowley will have enough on his hands with trying on new perukes, and essaying new washes upon a complexion somewhat of the swarthiest for a bridegroom, to trouble himself further touching the airs and graces of this bumpkin Venus of Thrapstone!"

The king's mind was, in truth, in the most feverish state of excitement. A new wife, writes La Bruyère, "*l'emporte sur une ancienne maîtresse!*" and so satisfactory were the reports which reached England of the southern brilliancy of Doña Caterina's large dark eyes, her good grace, and, above all, her desire to please the capricious fancy of her future lord and master, that, strange to relate, his Majesty's thoughts

were bent rather upon the infanta than upon the duchesses, countesses, and viscountesses, tormenting themselves and *him* to promote their elevation at court. "Out upon the jades!—all in the same vein —all bent upon the same design!" cried Charles, thrusting across the table the packets of perfumed memorials and petitions with which his favourite came charged to swell the amount of his previous embarrassment. "Seeing that I have provided myself with a wife, they would fain metamorphose the gender of my whole household, and set up a petticoat government to my very teeth! *Grand merci, mesdames!* As the royal cut-throat says in the play—'There 'll come a time for *that* hereafter!' Meanwhile, here!—Harris, May, Chiffinch, Sawtrey—one of you! bear me this bale of sweet commodities to the chancellor, to keep company with those I remitted to his hands last night; and pray him to provide fair ladies to his liking for her Majesty's household, and fair answers of apology to the ladies of his *dis*liking, who pester us with their importunities."

"A household chosen by Sir Edward were a sight to see!" exclaimed Buckingham, delighted at the verification of his hopes. "Yet I would fain beseech you, sire, to take into consideration the high birth and breeding of Lord Shrewsbury's noble countess!"

"*Whose* noble countess, George?" cried the king, with a laugh. "Would you have me insult her

Majesty the queen with the services of a quean so notorious?"

"I beseech your Majesty's pardon," replied the duke, with saucy freedom. "I heard it announced last night that a countess belonging to one Master Roger Palmer—another quean of some notoriety—had been appointed by your majesty to the bedchamber."

"They lied who said it, George!" cried the king, who was in one of his most cordial veins of good-humour. "The new countess appointed *herself!*—would take no denial from *me*—would listen to no objections from the chancellor! Nay, so furious is the poor soul at the necessity for her dismissal from my favour, that at one time I feared even the promised coronet would scarcely bribe her from her design of selling her soul to the Lapland witches for a wind to sink the fleet and the infanta, as the law-pleas of our sapient kingdom of Scotland avouch to have been done to delay the coming of my grandsire James's red-polled Danish bride!"

"Your Majesty need entertain no present uneasiness. The wind sets fair for the Downs," observed Lord Lovell, glancing towards the window, in no mind to have the cause of their meeting overlooked.

"So that I may chance be summoned to Portsmouth before set of sun!" cried the king. "I, who had promised Barbe to sup with her for the last

time! And, by the way, Lovell, thou who art so forward to promise me a wife, what news of thy own? Buckingham, we look to *you* on that score."

"My Lord Lovell has received the amount of his wager, sire," interrupted the duke, "and your Majesty should receive the confession of my defeat, did it contain any incident more diverting than the event of a lady's ill manners. I went—(according to your Majesty's commands)—but neither saw nor conquered. Whether refused admittance to see lest I should *succeed* in conquering, I leave to the decision of your penetration; but as I am ready to swear that my Lord Arran saw double in the case, I more readily pardon fate and the lady that I was not permitted to see at all!"

"Admit at least that I did my best to spare your grace and your grace's road-horses unnecessary pains," cried Lovell, with a self-sufficient smile. "The Duke of Buckingham is a wizard of renown; yet I am as satisfied of the inefficacy of his incantations to draw my wife to court, as to sink the precious flotilla which bears her highness of Braganza at this moment into the Channel."

"The brag is of the boldest, Arthur," exclaimed the king. "Recollect meanwhile that, *at present*, I choose to hear no profane mention of a lady to whom it is promised me that I am to lose my heart at sight. And, faith, I little doubt it. 'T is a winged toy ever on the perch for a flight; and, like a carrier-pigeon,

comes back as fast as it goes, to be ready for an excursion in some opposite direction."

"Your Majesty is fortunate in being able to make so light of your coming cares!" cried Buckingham, with an affected sigh. "There are two of us here present who, or I mistake, could furnish you to a hundredweight with a computation of the oppression of the chains of matrimony. Yet neither my Lord Lovell nor myself had mortgages on our single estate to increase their irksomeness, such as may chance to be insisted upon by my Lady Barbara of the new earldom."

"*Au jour, le jour!*" cried the king, cheerfully. "Destiny is still in my arrear a world of joys to compensate for the out-at-elbow days of penance of my princedom. I have promised the chancellor and myself to be the best of husbands; and the king over the water, and his cardinal, promise *me* that the infanta shall render me the happiest."

"God send it, sire!" cried the duke, with pretended fervency. "I would only that we could add —the richest. But I greatly fear that his Spanish excellency's prediction will prove true, that Doña Caterina's dower will cost its weight in gold to keep our own."

"And if it do, George, nearly four hundred thousand pounds in gold will go far towards the maintenance," said the king, sharply.

"I pray your Majesty may ever be so fortunate as

to receive half the sum," retorted his grace, "or, I might say, a quarter; since, after all De Mello's mighty protestations, King Alphonso entreateth us like some usurer of the Old Jewry, sending so much in bullion, and so much in commodities. 'T is rumoured on 'Change that your Majesty's name is in the market, as part owner of fifty puncheons of Val de Peñas, a hundred barrels of potash, besides the Lord and the Board of Trade know how many bags of Lisbon sugar!"

Within a week of this carouse, his Majesty, fresh from the tears and shrieks of the now Lady Castlemaine, was on his road to Portsmouth to welcome the new queen; and, in the first frank impulse of his heart, avowed in his letters to the chancellor that the timid young foreign princess, whose dark eyes were so languishing, and whose voice so sweet and low, had produced a most favourable impression on his heart. "You would much wonder to see how well we are acquainted already," said he. "In a word, I think myself very happy."*

For a king to aspire to "happiness" is a pretension beyond his condition in life. It suited Lady Castlemaine as little that Charles should be "well acquainted" with his youthful bride, as it suited the courtiers that he should think himself happy in wedlock. Before the royal party arrived at Hampton Court for the enjoyment of the honeymoon,

* Macpherson Papers, I. 22, note.

mischief had been at work; and though the month was May (a season that seemed expressly created by nature for royal honeymoons), breezes were blowing more boisterous than the turbulent equinox.

Stimulated by the bad advice of Rochester, Jermyn, Killigrew, and Hamilton, Lady Castlemaine strenuously insisted upon the king's performance of a promise given in love's melting hour to elevate her to the rank of lady of the bedchamber, from which every circumstance but her birth tended to exclude her; in spite of the entreaties of Clarendon and Ormond that he would not overlook the scandal to good manners and the ill example afforded to the kingdom by so unprovoked an insult to the unoffending queen.

"Supposing, sire, as I can well suppose, that no intermeddling person ventures to apprize her Majesty of the relationship held towards her sovereign by the young son of the countess," pleaded Ormond, presuming on his grey hairs to play the monitor, "may I inquire whether a woman, jealous of her hold on your Majesty's affections, is not likely to mislead her legitimate rival as to the modes and habits by which those affections are to be moved? May I presume to ask whether Lady Castlemaine is likely to prove a prudent counsellor for a virtuous woman, or a safe companion for an unsuspecting one?"

"Ask what you will, and I can give but such

answer as I may. That my kingly word is pledged, and that my kingly palace of Hampton would be too hot to hold me, did I so much as dream of evading the performance of my promise," said Charles. "Flesh is frail, my lord duke, albeit your mellow years may have forgotten the fact; and I am free to confess that my heart is not proof against the influence of woman's tears."

"And does your Majesty suppose, then, that the eyes of the queen are insured against weeping, and her heart against the tenderness and sensibility of her sex?" cried his grave admonitor, with indignation. But Ormond spoke in vain. The king, who, like all men of easy, indolent, selfish habits, detested a scene, was already out of hearing; and on the morrow night, upon the return of the court to Whitehall, the mistress was presented to the wife; and the whole court stood by to watch the triumph of the sinner, and the anguish of the saint.

But, in spite of the manœuvres of the libertine associates of the king by whom the injury had been wantonly prepared, the inoffensive Katharine had already partisans in the country. It was easy to make a jest of the sallow uncouthness of her six broad-nosed, narrow-shouldered Portuguese maidens of honour; to deride, at the instance of the Duke of Buckingham, her Majesty's equerry, Dom Pedro de Silva, under the name of Pierre Dubois or Peter Wood; or to find it passing absurd that her Majesty's

coiffeur should be breveted under the name of barber. But nationalities are themes of contempt only to the narrow-minded; and the most prejudiced of the court were fain to admit that the manners of the queen and of her *grande maîtresse*, the Countess de Panétra, were as perfect as if modelled in that court and parliament of love,—the circle of the queen-mother of France.

From Whitehall this decree went rapidly forth to the city and the provinces. Her Majesty's position begat pity, and, pity being akin to love, the acclamations of "Long live the queen!" which assailed her whenever, either in her barge or coach, she attempted to take the air, waxed more loud, and fully as sincere as those of "God save the king!" which, for five years past, had been wearing out the echoes of London and Westminster. No sooner was the little world apprized, by the indiscreet whispers of the great, that upon the public presentation of Lady Castlemaine to the queen by the hands of his Majesty, Katharine, though for a moment able to control her emotion, had in a few minutes been seized with convulsions, and carried from the chamber with the blood bursting from her lips, than, perceiving that her brief reign of conjugal ascendancy was over, they began to honour as a martyr her whom they already loved as a queen.

But while the kind and generous compassionated her position, the worldly-wise of a court which,

modelled upon that of France, was a college of shrewdness and double dealing, decreed that her Majesty was grievously to blame. She was guilty of a blunder, and at court a blunder is more exceptionable than a crime. What business had she to give way to her feelings? Nay, what business had a queen *with* feelings? Convulsions and hysterics are the constitutional frailties of a chambermaid or sempstress. To be the daughter and mother of kings,—to say nothing of the wife,—it is indispensable that the impulses of the mind should overmaster the impulses of the body; and as for jealousy, had his Majesty required her to take to her arms a score of the mistresses he had notoriously taken to his, it was her policy to submit. And is not policy both law and gospel to a royal conscience?

So reasoned the Buckhursts, Rochesters, Buckinghams, and so, alas! *pretended* to reason one whose principles should have been of firmer texture. Clarendon was required by his royal master not only to be of the same opinion, but with all his force of eloquence impress it upon the queen; and whereas the chancellor, like the devil, could quote scripture to his purpose, he succeeded in proving to the weeping Caterina, by means of a hundred of the proverbs of Solomon and fifty of the precepts of St. Paul, that it was the duty of the wife to submit to every mode and modification of insult and injury inflicted upon her patience by her lawful husband.

Had not Hyde already held the seals, his loyal sophistry would have merited the reward of a mitre!

The queen submitted;—whether to the eloquence of Clarendon, or because her countrywomen having been sent back to Lisbon on pretence of the displeasure of the people, she feared she might be sent after them. At the close of a painful struggle, which tarnished the lustre of her dark eyes and withered her young cheek, she consented to accept the services of Lady Castlemaine as her lady in waiting; and while the wedded courtiers of King Charles exclaimed to their chaste spouses, "Behold a model for wives!— honour to the royal Griselda!" the courtiers, who had condemned her sullenness when she ventured to oppose the pleasure of the king, despised her instability now that she gave in her submission. They were angry with the patience with which she resigned herself to become the most unhappy of women.

For so amiable was the unpretending character of the queen, that it was no consolation to *her* when, soon afterwards, her insolent rival was visited by humiliations equal to her own; though carefully apprized by the gossip of Miss Middleton and others of her maids of honour, with whom, as nearest of her own age, she chiefly associated, that it was no longer the bright eyes of the countess which nightly attracted the king to sup in her apartments at

Whitehall, his Majesty having made it the condition of his visits that the young and lovely granddaughter of Lord Blantyre should never be absent from her entertainments; while the homage tendered to Miss Stewart by Buckingham and the rest of the courtiers left not the countess a moment in doubt of the estrangement of the affections of her royal lover.

In this new scandal, the queen saw only cause for sorrow. It was no comfort to her that others were to be made as miserable as herself. Her wife-like resignation, meanwhile, afforded no pretext to the king for further harshness or discourtesy. In the intervals of his banquets with the Castlemaine, and flirtations with the Stewart, he deported himself with decency towards the poor moping sallow thing from whom his unkindness had extracted all the bloom and sprightliness of youth; and as Katharine was constantly assured by the selfishness of her ladies, that the only mode to attract the king to her society was to maintain the brilliancy of the court by a series of entertainments such as he had been in the habit of enjoying previous to her arrival in England, her Majesty willingly lent herself to the suggestion. The summer was come, the session over. The court was enjoying itself at Hampton, a spot endeared to Katharine by the memory of those happy hopes with which it had inspired her bridal hours; and though the transient dream had vanished, it was something

to linger in the place by whose associations it was recalled to mind.

To the common routine of balls, given alternately by her Majesty and the Duchess of York, and kept up chiefly by the members of their united households, a charming variation was proposed by the Comte de Comminges, a suggestion borrowed from the fêtes he had witnessed at Fontainebleau and St. Germain on occasion of the marriage of the young king his master with the infanta of Spain. Instructions were given by his excellency's secretaries, with a degree of zeal becoming the occasion, for the ordering of a *bal costumé* at court; and the Chevalier de Grammont, and other foreign adventurers by whom the circle of the easy monarch was beset, exerted themselves to do honour to the occasion by the exercise of the utmost magnificence and taste. Her Majesty, whose notions did not overstep the common-place freedoms of the masquerades in vogue at the court of Lisbon, hailed with delight the prospect of an entertainment where brilliancy was not to be purchased at the cost of decorum.

It was but a few days previous to the promised fête that Charles, at the conclusion of the hasty, yet ceremonious morning visit to the queen which comprised his conjugal civilities for the day, expressed a desire that, in addition to the invitations issued, a list of which had been submitted to his approval, there might be despatched in her Majesty's

name a command to attend the fête, to "the Lady Lovell."

"The name, methinks, is unfamiliar to me?" observed the queen, musingly.

"The lady, a peeress by estate, having been resident in the provinces since your Majesty's arrival in this country, hath not yet enjoyed the honours of presentation," replied the king. "But being at present detained in Westminster by the process of a law-plea, I am desirous that a personage of such rare merit and distinction should, on her return to her estates, bear back to her country-cousins tidings of the hospitalities and refinements of the court of her sovereign."

Had his Majesty seen fit to add "rare beauty" to his communications of the excellences of Lady Lovell, there had been more virtue in the ready acquiescence with which his request was fulfilled by the queen.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was at the malicious suggestion of the Duke of Bucks that this royal invitation had been devised. After paying two thousand pistoles for the *dis*satisfaction of *not* beholding Lord Lovell's wife, he was determined to enjoy the satisfaction and revenge of *beholding* her at the expense of his lordship.

Lady Lovell had been reluctantly compelled to visit the metropolis by a citation from the high court of Exchequer, at the suit of her husband; and generously apprehensive of entangling the hot temper of the old general in family disputes, or an over-frank exposition of his grievances against the king, she had declined the escort of Sir Richard.

"'T is natural she should have more confidence in a younger head and younger arm, than in those of the cavalier!" reflected Sir Richard, after hearing from his fair niece an entreaty that she might be accompanied only by Master Shum and his wife. "But no

matter! With God's blessing, she will need no aid of mine. Dame Corbet's son, as they tell me, holds high office in chancery; and as Nancy is to abide under his roof, no fear of her wanting protection."

Nevertheless, when fairly established in the household of the somewhat pragmatical son of her excellent governess, Lady Lovell, though satisfied as ever that the choleric old soldier was not exactly the man to advance her law-plea, or escort her through the silken mazes of a court, could not help longing for companionship of a more suitable nature than that of her demure auditor, or the mouthing master in chancery, who bewildered her understanding with technical phrases, instead of enlightening it with facts. Good old Elias Wright was now infirm beyond all power of rendering her assistance; and though, previous to his surrender of her affairs, he had carefully instructed his nephew in all matters appertaining to the mortgage of the Lovell estates, Lady Lovell foresaw that she had lost much in the warmth and circumstantiality of evidence derivable from eye-witness alone. Neither Master Shum nor herself would be able to do justice to the disinterestedness of all parties in the transaction, saving that sullen son and husband who, after rejecting as a gift the property preserved from sequestration by a deed in which even the searching eyes of the Commonwealth were unable to find a flaw, was now eager to invade with the strong arm of the law the estates

he had not chosen to accept as a free-will offering.

As far, however, as the professional prolixity of Master Corbet enabled her to approach an opinion, Lady Lovell understood that she had nothing to fear from the proceedings instituted against her, beyond the unpleasant exposure of her family disagreements. Nay, it was shrewdly hinted by certain of the long heads and big wigs retained in her behalf, that Lord Lovell had commenced his suit only as an appeal to the liberality of his royal master, by proving to him in open court that he was *minus* an estate most dear to him, and *plus* a wife most detested, because the last gold piece of that faithful subject, his sire, had been sacrificed to the interests of that faithless king, his sovereign. A stronger bond of family obligation could scarcely be shown on record.

But this version of the case was indignantly rejected by the fair defendant in the cause of Lovell *versus* the trustees of Lovell. Grounding her judgment rather on the physiognomical traits displayed in his portrait than upon the moral traits evinced in his proceedings, she chose to attribute his opposition to pride and a sense of justice; prone, like all generous spirits, to measure the conscientiousness of others by her own.

Provoked by her wilful blindness, Master Corbet next suggested that—notwithstanding the worthiness of her cause as a matter of law—that subtle essence

of jurisprudence called "equity" might, in the hour of trial, appear to hover, like a freakish Will-o'-the-wisp, over the adverse party; and by some concatenation of arguments which her ladyship found it difficult to follow, even advised her that, if she possessed influential friends either *in* court or *at* court, Madame Themis might perhaps be made to see the clearer for a pair of spectacles of their providing. But, at the mere hint of such corrupt practices, Lady Lovell's indignation burst forth. She would hear of no deviation from the strictest and most straightforward path of rectitude and course of law.

"Under your ladyship's favour, madam," remonstrated Master Corbet, "if your object be, as I conclude, *success*, no reasonable means ought to be neglected. For weeks and months hath my Lord Lovell been occupied in creating a party for himself to the prejudice of your ladyship. To the great world you are personally unknown; to the legal world, represented as a despoiler—nay, almost as an impostor—a woman of low birth and habits, engrafted by chicanery upon the noble stock of a ruined house. It is vitally important that this dire impression should be counteracted."

"Be it effected, then, by fair and open means!" cried Lady Lovell, with glowing cheeks. "If it be needful to establish my respectability in the eyes of the world, my father's kinswoman, the old Countess of Carlisle, shall present me at court, according to

her frequent proposition. As a peeress of the realm, I am entitled to a private audience of their majesties."

Scarcely an hour after despatching a formal request to the lady in waiting for the appointment of a suitable occasion for this purpose, the royal invitation was placed in the hands of Lady Lovell. It was now too late to retract her petition; nor did she altogether regret that a private presentation was to preface the courtly publicity of the royal ball.

A day and an hour were instantly appointed. A small summer drawing-room of the old palace of Hampton Court, in the suite of state apartments overlooking the river, was usually selected by Queen Katharine for receiving those privileged persons admitted to private audience. Nothing could be simpler than this unadorned chamber. The mouldings and wainscotings were of pure white, and the hangings of pale sea-green damask; a chair and footstool, somewhat richer than the rest, alone indicating the place of the queen, whose appearance and demeanour were of a far from imposing character. Dingy in complexion, heavy in countenance and deportment, Katharine was seen to peculiar disadvantage amid the bevy of youthful beauties selected to compose her household. But though the first impressions produced by the young queen were far from favourable, scarcely had she given utterance to the customary compliments when Lady Lovell

felt prepossessed in her behalf. In speaking, her large dark eyes became, if not animated, expressive and benign; and there was an indication of helplessness in her broken English, which accorded well with her foreign and almost girlish appearance. The blazing and audacious beauty of Lady Castlemaine "paled its ineffectual fires" before the mild lustre of her meekness, which well became the august position of one who has nothing to obtain by self-assumption.

To the venerable countess the deportment of the youthful queen was almost respectful; — to the country lady her *protégée* simply gracious. But while Lady Carlisle regarded her sovereign in admiration of a deportment so different from that of the haughty lady she had last beheld inhabiting those walls,—the domineering Henrietta Maria,—Lady Lovell regarded her with far deeper interest as an unhappy woman, heart-broken by the indifference of her husband.

There is something peculiarly touching in the melancholy of a young heart stripped suddenly of its illusions, and wrecked upon the arid and flinty shore of the world. Reared in that absolute ignorance of all things needful peculiar to the insulated education of royalty, Katharine of Braganza, tenderly beloved by her brother Don Alphonso, had been taught to expect from her future consort the same affectionate deference she had received at the court of Portugal;

and from the moment the policy of Mazarin decreed that the balance of power in Europe could only be maintained by the transference of so slight a weight in the scale as the hand of the princess of Braganza to the endurance of a king of England, Katharine was instructed that Britain was the garden of the world, and Charles Stuart an English mirror of the graces of Iberian chivalry. In becoming his wife, she was to become the most fortunate of women and of queens!

In this charming illusion had she bidden adieu to the orange groves of Belem; and from her embarkation in the Tagus to the hour of setting foot on British grounds, the gallantry of Lord Sandwich and his fleet was taxed to the utmost to maintain the deceit. Even her first interview with the king had failed to disenchant her imagination. The excitement of that moment imparted a charm to her countenance which the attraction of novelty in any shape served to enhance in the eyes of her fickle husband; nor was it till after the expiration of a week or two that, the attentions paid in her presence to the favourite mistress having roused her indignation, and her indignation been publicly reprimanded by the dismissal of her Portuguese attendants, that the queen gave way to a despair which with the king's courtiers passed under the name of sullenness.

The heart of Charles II.—if so flimsy a thing deserve to pass under that noble designation—

resembled certain birds which, though easily brought down by a first shot, are never to be reapproached if once suffered to get wing. The queen had lost that golden opportunity which she had misconstrued into the prelude to a life of happiness, and the advantage was never to be regained. All was over!—love, hope, joy,—the prospects of domestic life, of loving children,—of a calm and contented decline brightened by the reminiscences of a happy youth! Deserted, despised, an object of pity to some and contempt to others, Katharine beheld the homage of the courtiers dedicated before her face to Lady Castlemaine; leaving her abandoned and desolate in a foreign country,—no tender hand to dry her tears,—no friendly spirit to afford her counsel,—her only chance of securing even the decent courtesies of her husband depending upon the degree of patience with which she might be disposed to support the insults of a rival.

With a sympathy readily to be understood did Lady Lovell regard the dispirited young foreigner, who, having the misfortune to be a queen in addition to that of being a neglected wife, was debarred the consolations of independence and personal enjoyment which brightened her own career; and, as if conscious of the kindly thoughts passing in her bosom, Katharine, perceiving that her fair visitor was able to converse fluently in French, entered readily into conversation.

It was a bright sunny autumnal day. Miss

Middleton and Miss Warmester, the attendant maids of honour, had profited by the momentary absence of the lady in waiting to saunter forth into a stone balcony abutting from the adjoining chamber, in order to display themselves to the admiration of a few idlers in the gardens below, and indulge in criticisms at their expense. The queen, left alone with the Countess di Panetra and her guests, felt comparatively happy and at ease, when, suddenly, repeated bursts of laughter from the ante-chamber caused the brow of Katharine to become overclouded, and the eyes of the Panetra to sparkle with indignation.

The aged Countess of Carlisle, a rare visitor at court, expected every moment to find her majesty's page-in-waiting despatched to inquire the origin of this indecorous mirth; but, to her surprise, no notice was taken. It was in this guise that the approach of the king usually announced itself to his wife. But Lady Lovell was wholly unsuspicious of his Majesty's proximity, when the precipitate return of the Lady Berkeley managed to precede by a moment the entrance of a tall, heavy-looking, richly-accoutred personage, remarkable chiefly for an air of slouching self-possession, whom, but for the humility of the queen's countenance as she rose from her seat to do him honour, it would have been difficult to invest with the poetical "divinity which doth hedge a king." Her fancy had depicted him better looking,—better bred; for, in place of the deference testified by his

consort to the grey hairs of the Countess of Carlisle, *he* noticed the old lady's obeisance merely by a careless inclination of the head, and, in pure listlessness, suffered both her Majesty and her companions to remain standing, while, with an abstracted air, he went through the ceremonies of an inquiry touching her Majesty's projects of pastime for the morning.

It was not till the close of Katharine's almost tremulous replies to a long series of idle questions, that the eyes of the king chanced to fall upon a graceful form, half hidden behind the yellow satin vertugadin of the Countess di Panetra. In a moment his whole demeanour changed. The careless husband disappeared, and the graceful cavalier stood in his place, as, bending towards her Majesty, he inquired the name of the stranger.

"I conceived it unnecessary, sir, to present the Lady Lovell to your notice; conceiving, from your observations of yesterday, that her ladyship was well known to you," replied Katharine, a slight tinge of red becoming perceptible on her swarthy cheek as she glanced suspiciously towards her guest.

"I regret to own myself less fortunate than your Majesty hath been pleased to suppose me," replied the king, coolly; and with a more respectful air he signified his desire for presentation. An ironical smile passed between the two damsels of honour, who had now taken up their position behind the

chair of Katharine, on perceiving a certain unusual air of embarrassment pervade the deportment of the king, when he found that of the country lady wholly devoid of flurry or confusion. The noble countenance of Lady Lovell remained unchanged, and her air serene, while he addressed her; for it was not the witty companion of Etherege and Buckhurst, it was not the gay comrade of Buckingham and Rochester, *she* discerned in the dangerous Charles Stuart. She beheld in him only a man who neglected to pay his debts of honour to a living subject, and his debts of gratitude to a dead one, and, in spite of the easy grace of his person and gallantry of his address, despised the unprincipled and ungenerous master of the elder Lovells.

That the impression produced by her own beauty upon his Majesty was of a very different nature, was perceptible to every witness of the scene. The transitory bloom produced by his arrival faded from the cheek of the queen when she observed the king gradually recede to the window overlooking the gardens, so as to compel Lady Lovell to follow him and stand somewhat apart from the circle, while he proceeded to interrogate her touching the progress of the law-proceedings instituted against her. Already poor Katharine beheld in Lady Carlisle's *protégée* a new enemy arrayed against her peace; and no longer inclined to pursue her cheerful chat with the venerable countess, who, nearly fifty years before, had been

resident, with the earl her husband, at the court of Lisbon, sank into a desponding reverie.

"Much as I could desire that this suit were amicably adjusted, and inexplicable as *now* appear to me the differences subsisting between your ladyship and Lord Lovell," observed the king, in reply to the exposition of facts he had demanded, "I grieve to be under the necessity of avowing that I foresee no conclusion to the dispute, save under the rigid interpretation of the law. Hitherto, madam, let me admit that my wishes have sided with an old companion in arms, the son of a most loyal subject; but since, from the moment of this interview, I feel it impossible for me to remain the partizan of my friend, I shall strive to dismiss the matter from my thoughts, till the issue be formally communicated to me by the lord chancellor. Meanwhile be the Lady Lovell assured that, whatever sentence is decreed by the wisdom of the law, it will at all times be most gratifying to her Majesty and myself to welcome her at court with the attentions due to her personal merit."

A silent obeisance was the only answer to be tendered to so flattering an intimation; but when, after a moment's silence, the king procceded in a lower voice to express his hopes that her ladyship had received an invitation to the approaching fête, Lady Lovell ventured to outrage the rules of etiquette by an entreaty that, in her present unprotected and

delicate situation, she might be permitted to absent herself from the brilliant scene. It would be extremely painful to her feelings, she said, to hazard a personal encounter with Lord Lovell.

"His lordship's presence at court, madam, depends for the future upon the signification of your wishes," replied the king, still more and more fascinated by the sensibility glowing in the countenance of the fair stranger; "for hitherto it has depended upon mine. No invitation will be issued to his lordship that can place an impediment to the satisfaction I promise myself in your ladyship's presence at Hampton."

And straightway quitting the window with a profound bow, which admitted of no rejoinder or expostulation, the king bent his steps towards Katharine, with whom he entered into conversation in so gracious and confidential a tone, that the circle accepted it as a token of dismissal, and retiring in a group into the adjoining ante-chamber, the countess and her *protégée* found themselves at liberty to depart.

But the odour of royal favour had now sanctified the fair stranger! Without an exception, the ladies present crowded round the countess to claim an introduction to her lovely kinswoman. Lady Berkeley was at the trouble to inform her of the precise moment at which it would be desirable to enter the ball-room on the following evening, so as to be in waiting for the appearance of their Majesties; and had not Lady Carlisle interfered with an assurance

that her niece, Lady Capel, had already undertaken to escort her rustic cousin to the ball, Lord Lovell's rejected wife would have been overpowered by the chaperonage of as many fair courtièresses as are ever to be found at the service of any fortunate individual illustrated by the light of a king's countenance.

"You have succeeded to a miracle, my dear child!" said the old lady, as she settled herself for a doze in the carriage on their way to town. "During my fifty years' experience I remember no such successful *début*. In the whole course of my service, I never received from the queen-mother a tenth part of the courtesies bestowed upon us this single morning by her Majesty; and, as to the king, I could only desire that his homage were somewhat less warmly demonstrated. How is all this, my dear Lady Lovell? Are you sincere in your assurance that this is the first time of your quitting your rural seclusion? Yet why should I feel amazed? *Beau sang se fait connaître;* and the best blood in England was intermingled in the veins of your father."

CHAPTER XV.

HAD the Lady Capel been aware of the number of the candidates for the office peremptorily assigned by her wealthy and heirless aunt, she had perhaps been better reconciled to the prospect of appearing at court as the bear-leader of a country cousin.

Herself the daughter of one of the few noble adherents who had followed to the continent the widow of the unfortunate Charles, her ladyship was educated in a convent at Paris, under the auspices of the queen-mother; and dire was her disappointment when, on finding her dowerless hand unsolicited among the mercenary nobles of the court of Louis XIV., her father saw fit to bestow it upon a wealthy English baronet, who had been captivated by her beauty; an alliance which condemned her to exchange the airy nothings of delightful France for the ponderous substantiality and foggy climate of her native country.

From her French education, Lady Capel derived little beyond a passion for dress, and conversancy with the mincing affectation of a fine lady. Her refinement was wholly superficial, and she prepared herself accordingly to be as ungracious as decency would permit towards the uncivilized kinswoman for whom Lady Carlisle had bespoken her services at court. The eloquence of the old countess's strong-box had alone prevailed over her scruples on the occasion; and as the journey to Hampton required in those times more than three hours to perform, and the royal fête commenced at the unseemly hour of eight, she expected, when her gaudy equipage drew up by daylight before a dingy house in Duke-street, Westminster, to be excruciated by the spectacle of Lady Lovell's high head and scanty skirts, embellished by the tinsel fineries of a provincial belle.

It may be doubted, however, whether her surprise on beholding the elegant and lovely being who was to be her companion, afforded not a still more disagreeable surprise. Obeying the injunctions of the old countess, Lady Lovell had suffered herself to be provided with a habit of the most costly and becoming description, and the services of the newest Parisian coiffeur imported by the Duchesse de Mazarin and Chevalier de Grammont; and elaborate as was the elegance of Lady Capel, she saw that she had a lesson to learn in the art of which she had hitherto esteemed herself a professor. After eyeing askance

the graceful figure by her side, she grew out of conceit with her own frippery garlands and unmeaning draperies.

Piqued beyond her patience, and persuaded that, though transcendent in purchasable fashion, Lady Lovell would soon betray her real rusticity by some breach of that courtly etiquette which the court-bred narrowly denominate good manners, Lady Capel condescendingly proceeded to instruct her in the course to be pursued.

"As I enjoy *at present* no appointment in the household," said she, in a tone of patronage, "it is impossible for me to promise to your ladyship a place within view of their Majesties. Though the ball is to be held to-night in the Cardinal's Hall, yet, as seven hundred invitations have been issued, our only hope of obtaining a seat is by making at once towards the lower end, by which their Majesties and the household enter the gallery."

Lady Lovell smiled, and was content. All she desired was to obtain the least ostensible place, and quit the ball at the earliest hour; for though unusually elated by the certainty she enjoyed, for the first time since her sojourn in the metropolis, of security from an accidental encounter with Lord Lovell, she recoiled from the publicity into which she was forced by the arbitrary caprice of the king. Yet, when they entered the stately hall of entrance, lined with yeomen of the guard, and resounding with

the inspiring strains of a military band, gleaming with lights and covered with a carpeting of scarlet cloth, an irresistible consciousness assailed her that she was now in her fitting station, and that, under any other circumstances, she should have been gratified at entering the palace of her sovereign as a bidden and honoured guest.

Secretly indignant, meanwhile, that the unwonted spectacle of the splendours around her should extract no comment from her companion, Lady Capel set down her country cousin as the most stupid and insensible of ninnies. With an air of scarcely concealed disdain, she tendered their names to the usher in waiting, when, to her surprise, she was immediately accosted with an inquiry whether "he had the honour of addressing the Lady Lovell."

The insult was scarcely to be endured. *She*, the favourite of queens and foster-sister of princesses; *she*, the pupil of St. Evremond and flattered of the Chevalier de Grammont!—she to be mistaken for the Lady Bountiful of a Northamptonshire village! Still greater, however, was her amazement when, the real criminal having been pointed out, she was requested to accept a countermark for the queen's private entrance;—a place being reserved for her, by their Majesties' desire, among the ladies of the royal household. Though almost moved to exclaim, like Shakspeare's Old Lady to Anna Boleyn,

"I have been begging sixteen years in court,
And still a courtier, beggarly; while you,
A very fresh fish here (fie! fie! upon
This compelled fortune!), have your mouth filled up
Before you open it,"—

she experienced a paltry delight in having so much as arrived in company with one thus singularly distinguished by royal favour.

To Lady Lovell, meanwhile, the honours heaped upon her were as the crackling of thorns. Though the royal party had not yet entered the hall, hundreds of the brilliant assemblage were already ranged around, awaiting their Majesties' arrival, with the officers of the court and numerous gentlemen of condition, sauntering in the open central space, ready to place themselves in file on the signal of the music. At the extremity of the hall, a sort of platform or dais was erected for the accommodation of the royal party, in which privileged sanctuary not a creature was to be seen when Lady Lovell, conducted thither with much form and ceremony by the usher-in-waiting, was placed in her allotted seat, a single and solitary mark for the curiosity of hundreds. A new face at court, and such a face! A stranger at Hampton, and a stranger so memorably honoured! In the murmurs that arose as she took her seat, while all eyes were directed towards her, it was difficult to distinguish between the ejaculations of admiration caused by her

beauty, and the exclamations of inquiry touching her name and condition.

"*The Lady Lovell*, sayest thou?" demanded the Duke of Buckingham of Baptist May, who was in attendance near the private door devoted to the use of the king and queen. "Go to!—this is some idle mystification! Yonder queen of the graces my malapert hostess of Lovell House? I tell thee, fellow, 't is some noble kinswoman of Grammont or Comminges, freshly arrived from the Louvre! *Je m'y connais!* That graceful yet majestic deportment was never acquired elsewhere than in the '*citta ridente!*' My life on 't, the charming creature is Parisian born or bred."

Their colloquy was interrupted by the announcement and entrance of the court; and brilliant as was the effect produced by the sudden appearance of so many fair faces, rich uniforms, and sparkling jewels, more than one admiring eye still wandered from the gorgeous cortège towards the single beauteous figure standing alone in her flowing robes of glistening white satin, and an attitude of courtly dignity, such as might have drawn Vandyke from his grave to delineate. She seemed as if stationed there to do the honours of the palace to the king and queen!

Whispers ran from lip to lip among the ladies of the household as they took their seats. "Who can it be?"—"How provoking that the queen should

order a stranger placed among us!" which soon deepened into—"Let Miss Stewart look to herself!" "Let the Castlemaine bless her stars that she is not brought to-night into competition with this overpowering rival." For, after conducting the queen to her chair of state, and returning the salutations of those nearest to him, Charles made his way at once towards the seat of the fair stranger, to demand the name of the lady of the court she desired to have stationed by her side.

"The Lady Chesterfield, sire, is the only lady present with whom I have the honour to be acquainted," replied the fair stranger; and those who heard the answer, and beheld the king proceed to request the presence of the fairest and brightest of countesses, smiled at the simplicity of a woman who had thus ventured to display herself in perilous contrast with one of the most popular beauties of the court. Their next movement was to inveigh against her cunning, when they noticed to what advantage her dark hair and expressive countenance were seen beside the unmeaning blue eyes and golden ringlets of Lady Chesterfield; to say nothing of the lustre imparted to her countenance by the animation of familiar conversation with an intimate acquaintance.

The ball commenced with minuets, the dignified formality of which soon gave place to ballets, executed in costume by the leading ladies of the court; the principal group being headed by the Duchess of York,

and composed of the Misses Stewart, Middleton, Price, Hamilton, the Ladies Radnor, Chesterfield, and Denham, led by the Lords Ossory and Arran, by Grammont, Hamilton, Jermyn, and *le beau* Sydney.

Scarcely had they taken their places when the king, re-approaching the seat beside Lady Lovell, left vacant by the absence of the Countess of Chesterfield, commenced a conversation which the brilliant crowd soon began to notice as momentously particular.

"I am a suitor to your ladyship in the name and behalf of my friend the Duke of Buckingham," said Charles, with an ingratiating smile; "who labours under the mortification of apprehending that, in fulfilling my behest, he must have given unintentional offence to one whose gentleness and courtesy are a guarantee that she would not otherwise have driven from her gates a gentleman who had performed a pilgrimage of one hundred miles in the dogdays, in the hope of being permitted to salute the point of her slipper."

"That so trifling an incident, sire, should not yet have escaped his grace's recollection," replied Lady Lovell, "is a sufficient proof how little the duke is accustomed to be received with coolness. But I pray your majesty to consider my ill manners extenuated by the peculiar delicacy of my situation, which determines me to decline all presentation of strangers, or intimacy with persons on whose character in the

world my Lord Lovell could ground an imputation of levity."

"I am to understand, then," cried the king, not sorry for a pretext to avoid the promised introduction of his dangerous favourite, "that you would again refuse an interview to the duke?"

"If proposed by any voice less authoritative than that which now addresses me," replied Lady Lovell.

"You judge not, I trust, so harshly of me," retorted the king, in a lower tone, "as to imagine that I would repay the amiable concession of your visit here by forcing upon you a distasteful acquaintance? You exacted, madam, that Lord Lovell should be absent from our fête—you are obeyed! You desire that the Duke of Buckingham shall not approach you—he must submit! Grant me only a slight reward for my concession, by acquainting me whether it be your wish that, on any future occasion, the cavalier, whom I understand to be your ladyship's inmate at Lovell House, should be included in your invitations to court?"

Instead of the conscious blushes the king had intended to call up into the cheeks of Lady Lovell by this searching insinuation, an arch smile illuminated her fine features, as she replied, "I am largely indebted, sire, to the good offices of the Duke of Buckingham, who seems to have taken ample note of my domestic arrangements. But to your Majesty's interrogatory I have only to reply, that not even a

royal invitation would avail to withdraw the gentleman in question from his rural seclusion."

"So *proud?*" cried the king, with one of the good-humoured laughs which evinced his constitutional inaptitude to take offence.

"So *independent*, sire!" replied Lady Lovell, with firmness.

"You will at least enable me to make the attempt," observed the king, bending towards her in a closer whisper, "by instructing me in the name of your mysterious friend."

"I must again entreat your Majesty's indulgence," she replied. "It would grieve me, sire, to pronounce a name in your hearing which is likely to conjure up unpleasant recollections."

"Am I to learn, then," demanded the king, more gravely, "that disaffected or perhaps disloyal persons are harboured at Lovell House?"

"Under your pardon, sire," replied his companion, with dignity, "were I at liberty to breathe the name of my friend in your Majesty's presence, it would be recognized as one that commands, or *ought* to command, your Majesty's gratitude and affection."

"I no longer wonder at Lovell's repugnance to this beauteous creature!" mused the king, when, thus defied, he soon afterwards resigned his place to Lady Chesterfield. "She lays down the law even to *me*, as coolly as the saucy Castlemaine. I dare no more present George or Buckhurst to her, according

to my engagement, than bring Mrs. Nelly to sup here at Hampton with the Queen!"

And both Buckhurst and "George," who awaited at some distance his Majesty's summons, were surprised and indignant when they beheld Lady Lovell led in to supper by the Earl of Arran, whom his sister, Lady Chesterfield, had recommended to her good graces as a cavalier.

CHAPTER XVI.

On the following day, a single name invaded all the echoes of Hampton Court, and hovered on every idle lip that vented its gossiping in the playhouses of London. "Lady Lovell," the Cynthia of the minute, was enskied and sainted without opposition or deliberation. King, courtiers, and at length the nobodies ever on the watch to ape and parody the somebodies, could talk of nothing but "Lady Lovell!" Her beauty, accomplishments, elegance, riches, splendour, taste, came in enhancement of the romantic interest of her situation; and because her husband disdained her as a wife, every woman wanted to be her friend,—every man desired to become her lover!

Unconscious of half her triumph, and indifferent to the other, the lady calmly recounted to the admiring ears of Mistress Corbet the distinctions conferred on her at court, and was indignant to perceive

that Mistress Corbet's son considered her cause secured by the admiration excited in a ball-room by her stomacher and breast-knots. That very morning, the names of half the nobles in the land figured in the list of inquirers after her health; nay, Lady Capel forced her way in with such perseverance of servility, and tendered her compliments so far more respectfully than she had done to the queen the previous night, that Lady Lovell was at length moved to exclaim, "Suspend, I pray you, this adulation, and trust to my kinswomanly regard, madam, to apprise you, should there be any prospect of my driving Lady Castlemaine from her post."

It was only her gentle friend, Mistress Shum, who could be moved to participate in her disgust at finding herself promoted in the eyes of the world by the attentions of a royal libertine.

Her own husband, meanwhile, was sorely puzzled by this sudden change of politics. Lord Lovell began to regret that he had not suffered his projects to remain dormant, rather than, by summoning her to town, create hundreds of partizans for one whom, unknown, all were eager to condemn. His pretensions to the recovery of his estates were, he knew, legally untenable; and even the sympathy with which he had been hitherto regarded was now evaporating.

Whichever way he turned, he heard mention of no name but Lady Lovell's; nor, since the reign of Cinderella, had any heroine of a ball-room created

such a sensation! Lord Buckhurst indited a madrigal in her honour, which, set to a fashionable tune, was carolled by every fashionable mouth; while Grammont protested that he had at length beheld the one thing wanting to convert Great Britain into a garden of Eden—a lovely English soul inhabiting a lovely English body. Seeing, as it was then the custom to see, with the eyes of the king, all were unanimous in asserting the Northamptonshire beauty to be a paragon,—"*la belle parmi les belles.*"

"Wer't not for the shame of the thing, I would fain have a look at her among the rest," mused Lord Lovell, after sauntering home from the playhouse, where Nell Gwyn was venting her sallies in vain, so pre-engaged were the lords of her train in discussing the new divinity. "The sapling is not always to be taken as a specimen of the tree, nor the colt of the managed steed. Were this woman the property of another, I should hasten to stare among the other gaping fools of London; and why am I alone to be debarred the sight of a fair face, because the commodity happens to be my own?"

But to accomplish his wish, in the second place, was almost as difficult as to surmount his pride in the first. Piqued at his pointed exclusion from the *fêtes* at court, Lovell disdained to so much as pay further respects to a prince with whom a new fair face could obliterate the claims of an old fair friendship; and it was understood that Lady Lovell moved not abroad,

save to accept the invitations of the king and queen. Nevertheless, he felt persuaded that curiosity to view the capital, or devotion, or some other feminine foible, would sooner or later lure her forth, and he loitered accordingly in the neighbourhood at those hours when he knew that her ladyship's movements and his own would be most secure from observation.

On the Sabbath morning after her first appearance at court, at that early hour when

> Duns at his lordship's door began to meet,

and

> St. James's bell doth toll some wretches in,
> As tattered riding hoods alone could sin,

he had the satisfaction of perceiving that Madam Corbet was accompanied to church by the object of his hatred and curiosity; and trusting to the changes effected by the lapse of twelve years in his own appearance to remain undetected, he crossed the ladies on their path.

"'T is her own fault," quoth his lordship, "if, even at this barbarous hour of morning, she choose to traverse the parks unmasked and on foot, instead of decently preferring a chair."

It mortified his vanity to perceive with how strange an emotion of curiosity he was pursuing a person towards whom he had so long maintained such contemptuous indifference; and indescribable was his triumph when, after contriving to obtain a full view

of Mistress Corbet's companion, he beheld a face which, though he admitted its fairness, produced no further effect on his feelings than when his girlish bride stood beside him at the Dalesdene altar.

"I had fancied her twice as handsome!" he exclaimed, with a scornful smile. "Is *this* the moppet which, per force of kingly caprice, hath been exalted in public estimation? 'Od's death! Rowley must have lost all perception since his return to Fogland, to fancy this blushing gawky a divinity! Low as I ever valued her charms, methought she would mature into somewhat better than *this!*"

"Mere spite and envy!" was the cry of Arran and Rochester, when, joining them some hours afterwards in the Mall, he presumed to disparage the lady whom he stated himself to have accidentally encountered.

"Lely, who, at the command of their majesties, waited upon her yesterday with a request for permission to add her portrait to his gallery, protests that it is the fairest face and the fairest form he ever looked on," persisted the younger earl.

"He would say as much of Madam Chiffinch's ape, were the king to declare himself captivated by the physiognomy of the beast!" retorted Lovell. "And, faith, it would not surprise me; for, from the crooked policy of Harry Bennet to the upright gawkiness of my pseudo wife, Rowley's favour seems to run upon things ungainly. That he would but take her, and in lieu give me back my estate! I should hold it virtue

to perjure my immortal soul for the chance of a divorce!"

"If Buckingham be to be credited, you might obtain one on easier terms," observed Rochester, Lord Arran having at that moment withdrawn from their company. "I myself heard him acquaint the king that this peerless lady, who would not so much as abide his presence, entertained at Lovell House some led captain as her paramour."

Lord Lovell grew flushed with instant fever, then cold as death. For some moments he could not command himself to utter a syllable.

"You 're *sure* of this?" were his first intelligible words.

"Sure that I heard the duke *assert* as much," persisted Rochester.

"Let us go wait on him!" cried Lord Lovell, pressing towards the turnstile leading from the crowded Mall. "To be certified of such a fact, would save me a world of coin and care! Let us to Saville House."

"It proves the prolongation of your residence abroad to propose such a measure to *me*," cried Rochester, drawing up. "I would as lief make my apprenticeship in a pest-house! His grace and I are too big with mutual grievances to amalgamate as the contents of one room. But let me not obstruct your lordship's project. I will meet you to-night at Shaftesbury's, and learn the result. *Au revoir*."

With as unconcerned a mien and spirit as though he had been making some idle remark on the news or the weather, did Rochester saunter away from the man in whose bosom he had planted daggers! For instead of welcoming the intelligence which was to liberate him from his bonds, Lovell received with equal scorn and indignation the tale of his dishonour! Unconsciously to himself, he had taken pride in the high renown of her who bore his name; and he chose not that the frail divinity should be shivered into dust by any other hands than his own.

Pride was, in truth, the besetting sin of Lord Lovell's nature. In the generous, warm-hearted boy the fault might have been subdued by the wise guidance of education, or even trained to become a virtue of that aristocratic estate in which it had its origin, and which it was intended by Providence to adorn. But Lord Digby's haughty daughter, mistaking for a merit in her son that which at best could but become the origin of merit, had suffered the ripeness of the soil to give birth to weeds and briers, instead of cultivating its produce for purposes of use or ornament.

Such was the cause of Lord Lovell's first and only rebellion against his father; such the motive of his irrational opposition to an alliance with the granddaughter of a boor—of his wilful exile and malignant hatred against his wife. Despising her in the first instance for her ignoble birth, he at length detested

the very virtues which gave the lie to his aristocratic theories. But while detesting them, as proving him in the wrong, he was proud to know that their lustre reflected itself on the name of Lovell. It was not such a name which was to be brought to shame. It was not such a name which was to be trailed in the dust by the vulgar tongues of ante-chambers and street-corners. The degradation of Lady Lovell's disgrace must recoil more or less upon himself; the scorn, the stigma, must adhere to *him;* a dire addition to the weight of evils entailed upon him by his unlucky marriage!

It was under the irritation of these reflections that, escaping from the more crowded avenues of the park, Lord Lovell took his way towards the Birdcage Walk, with an intention of reaching the river-side from Scotland Yard, and thence taking boat to Saville House. Alone and self-absorbed, he had no one to whom to unburden his budget of miseries; and however a man's inward soul may cajole and flatter him in the hour of wantonness, in the hour of care it becomes the least sympathizing and most truth-dealing of monitors. While Lord Lovell exclaimed that he was "sinned against," the still small voice within began to accuse him audibly of "sinning!" His conscience reminded him, with a sneer, how small was the allegiance owed him by his wife; that the mischief was of his own creation; that he had sown the wind to reap the whirlwind.

"Still," argued the selfishness of the lordly egotist, "though little indebted unto *me*, this woman hath now lost sight of all she owes herself. Her father was a gentleman of honour; her mother, though of ungentle blood, an honest matron. She herself, prudent and discerning as she is said to be, must be aware how vast a load of responsibility falls upon the woman to whom is committed the charge of a noble and stainless name. And, above all, her self-respect, her personal and inward sense of chastity, to be sacrificed to so foul a temptation! Some starveling cavalier—some led captain—to tempt her from her lofty eminence! Fie on 't! fie on them both! The fellow dies by my hand, though the next hour I fling his paramour forth to the scorn and loathing of the world,—discharged from the slight and irresponsible bond that hath hitherto held us together."

The progress of his lordship's reflections next stumbled into a quarrel with the originator of his sad enlightenment. Why should he gratify the vindictive spirit of the Duke of Buckingham by repairing to him for confirmation of his ill reports? It would be impossible to listen dispassionately to a tale that touched him so nearly; and bitter would be his grace's triumph in watching, and whispering thereafter at Whitehall, the agonies of his wounded spirit. No! he would proceed at once to the fountain-head! Three days were still to elapse previous

to the first hearing of his petition to chancery. There was time for him to ride post into Northamptonshire. Lady Lovell's absence would favour the process of investigation. The paramour was left behind in enjoyment of the princely ancestral seat of the Lovells. It was *there* he would seek him,—*there* slay him,—*there* pour forth his blood as a libation to the earth whose rightful owner he had dishonoured!

Blinded by the intemperate emotions swelling in his veins, Lord Lovell quitted the park, and was taking his way towards his lodgings, near Whitehall, when, in the narrow turning towards Charles Street, his attention was attracted towards a sedan, the chairmen of which were, or pretended to be, inebriated; for, in spite of the remonstrances of a stout country servant by whom it was escorted, they persisted in jesting and sporting with several fellows of suspicious appearance, who had apparently been drinking in their company. Dusk was drawing on. At this season of the year, and during the absence of the court, the streets in that quarter of the town were nearly deserted; and it occurred to his lordship, on hearing the reiterated remonstrances of the serving-man, that some act of robbery or violence was intended.

Without wishing to entangle himself in a street brawl for the sake of a stranger, he determined at least to keep the parties in view till he could be

assured that no iniquity was in hand. Following silently and as though unconcernedly, he overheard one of the ruffianly-looking crew remark to another, that they were "ten minutes past their time; and that the duke would perhaps be up with them afore matters were ripe for his coming."

"What the plague kept her then a quarter beyond her usual stint?" replied his comrade. "A man can but do his best. Master Matthew said it was the duke's pleasure we should——"

But having imprudently advanced too near, in order to make himself master of their whispers, Lord Lovell's appearance now admonished them to silence. A moment afterwards, the conduct of the chairmen became more than ever obstreperous; and ere Lovell had leisure to form surmises concerning the "duke" who owned so beggarly a set of retainers, he found his own progress impeded by two of the gang, while a fight, real or pretended, commenced between the rest and the footman escorting the chair. It was an unlucky moment for such an outrage. No lamps were yet lighted,—no patrol was astir. Of all the twenty-four, the hour was most propitious for an act of outrage.

So apparently thought the tenant of the sedan. For at that moment a piercing shriek met his ears; and finding himself assailed with blows, his lordship no longer scrupled to draw and force his way through the villanous crew.

The sudden inbreak of a man of his appearance into the midst of them, seemed (rather than the blows which he distributed right and left as he made his way to the assistance of the victim of this evidently premeditated attack) to startle the cluster of cut-purses; and just as he attained the chair which the porters had set down on the causeway while they engaged in the conflict, and from which a lady was now vehemently struggling to extricate herself, one of the ruffians exclaimed aloud to his companions—"Heels and away! 'T is the Duke of Buckingham himself! I tell you 't is the Duke of Buckingham!"

Rejoicing in a mistake which had at least the effect of putting the enemy to flight, Lord Lovell proceeded to swing away by the collar one of the miscreants who was attempting to force back the lady into her place of durance, and who, finding her attendant driven from the field, fancied herself abandoned to the atrocities of a gang of bravoes.

"Compose yourself, madam," said Lovell, soothingly; "you are safe. These cowardly blackguards have taken the alarm."

And sustaining her on his arm towards the nearest house, he knocked loudly to obtain assistance. The lady had fainted; and when, having borne her into the hall to the amazement of the terrified woman-servant who obeyed his summons, the light he called for fell upon her face, he was alike distressed and interested to perceive that she was young, richly at-

tired, and singularly beautiful. Had it been otherwise, Lord Lovell would have probably left her to the charge of the horror-struck waiting-maid in attendance, and followed in pursuit of the lawless ruffians by whom the stranger was frightened from her propriety. But she was too lovely to be left, and verily he had his reward, for, on unclosing her eyes, her first movement was to cling to her deliverer, —her first words were an appeal to his protection. The lady's terrors seemed to have overmastered her reason.

"Fear nothing, madam," whispered Lord Lovell, without relinquishing his hold; "you are in safety—you are in honourable hands. These villains have fled the place."

"They may return though," suggested the stupid maid, who in her fright had neglected to close the doors.

"They will not dare attack you in a dwelling-house. I *pledge* myself to your security."

The lady, who had now in some degree recovered her self-possession, started up at this assertion, and gazed earnestly upon her deliverer. On recollecting herself to be under the protection of a stranger, she seemed to imbibe new apprehensions; for, on the renewal of Lord Lovell's protestations, the tears gushed from her eyes.

"That I should be thus abandoned to insult and shame!" cried she, incoherently. "I must go home

—I must go hence—do not detain me—let me instantly quit this place."

"Under your favour, madam, whether your residence be far or near, you are in no condition to attempt the streets on foot," interposed Lord Lovell. "If you choose to remain under this person's charge, I will hasten to procure a chair, in which you may depart hence under my guardianship."

Scarcely capable of utterance, the lady replied by a sign of affirmation; and having enjoined the old woman to afford no access to strangers during his absence, Lovell proceeded on his errand. Aware that a stand of hackney-chairs occupied the still-encumbered area of Palace-yard, he directed his footsteps to the spot.

But on reapproaching the obscure house in Charles-street, in which he had deposited his charge, accompanied by the chairman hired for her behoof, a painful presentiment assailed his feelings on beholding a coach attended by several servants drawn up before the door. Equipages were then so rare that Lord Lovell rightly conjectured it to belong to the "duke" obscurely alluded to by the wretches he put to flight. It was not, however, till he reached the door, and, by the reflected light of the links borne by the running footmen, detected their colour and bearings, that he perceived them to be the people of *Buckingham*

At that moment Lord Lovell was as little disposed to confront his grace as to face the arch-demon. There

was but one tone in which he could accost the man who had propagated, for the derision of the court, the infamy of Lady Lovell and his own disgrace; and that was of a nature too violent to beseem the presence of a woman. Since his grace had been admitted to an interview with the fair stranger, it was probable that she bore some immediate relation to him. For aught that Lovell knew, she might be his sister, mistress, daughter. It was not in *her* presence, therefore, that vengeance was to be taken.

Having, however, no grounds for his surmise, it became his duty to see her again, reward the zeal of the people who had afforded her shelter, resign her to the Duke if there appeared to be justification of the measure, or rescue her from his hands if she still made claim to assistance. When the people of the Duke of Buckingham strenuously opposed his entrance into the house, Lord Lovell grew more earnest than ever in his perseverance. Backed by the aid of the men by whom he was accompanied, he raised so powerful a din that the door unclosed to him; then rushing into the parlour where he had left the lady, in full expectation of being hailed and welcomed as a deliverer, he was surprised to find her not only restored to self-possession, but in calm conversation with the duke, who stood deferentially and mildly addressing her.

"I gladly accept your grace's offer to convey me in safety home," she observed, with stern decision, the moment Lovell made his appearance, "request-

ing my Lord Lovell, meanwhile, to accept my acknowledgments for his good offices."

Then, taking the hand offered by the duke to lead her to the hall, without further courtesy or apology to the gentleman by whom she had been so gallantly defended and generously assisted, she was about to pass with a look of scorn the person of the indignant Lovell, when his lordship—having no reasonable pretext to quarrel with the duke for being at hand to render aid, which *he* was equally willing to afford, or for being arrayed with precise and foppish elegance, while *he*, in his combat with the chairmen, had disordered to utter confusion his previously simple costume,—hastily recalled to mind the grievances of the morning, and arrested for a moment the stately movements of his triumphant rival.

"When your grace shall have discharged your task as guardian of *one* lady," he exclaimed with bitterness, "I have a word or two to crave in atonement to *another* for certain aspersions, which in three days' space I pledge myself to prove calumnious."

"At any hour and moment I am at your lordship's service," replied Buckingham, undisturbed; "praying only that the aspersions of which you speak may not prove to be illusions of the brain-sick fancy, to which I am fain to attribute the present excitement of your lordship's manner, and unseemliness of your address."

And, with a courtly bow, the duke, and the heavenly creature who had made election of his hand, passed

on, leaving to Lovell the agreeable task of requiting the civilities of the old woman, and listening, while the pungent fumes of her candle irritated his nostrils, to her recital of the surprise with which the beautiful lady had hailed the arrival of the grand gentleman in the velvet suit, and the gratitude with which she had accepted his offers of protection.

CHAPTER XVII.

When the morrow dawned, and Lord Lovell, in the mist of a chilly autumnal morning, found his horse waiting, according to previous order, for a journey into Northamptonshire, he began to regret that a hasty pledge, given in a moment of violence, should compel him to quit the city without having elucidated by further investigation the mysterious adventure of the preceding evening.

He had sought Lord Rochester according to appointment, but without obtaining a syllable of information tending to throw light either upon the charge involving his family honour, or his adventure with Buckingham's mysterious beauty, and, harassed by the disappointment, had given utterance to expressions alternately injurious to the veracity of the duke and the fame of Lady Lovell, which the malice of the earl took care should be overheard by many, and the malice of many took care should be speedily reported to the two individuals personally concerned.

His lordship's journey meanwhile proved far from a sedative to his irritation. His thoughts were divided between the attractions of the lovely being he had so lately held in his arms, and the hateful one he entertained hopes of being shortly able to dismiss for ever from all claim to such a privilege. He passed over in deliberate review those manifold attractions,—those finely formed features,—that lofty brow,—that faultless development of person,—the velvet texture of the skin,—the fragrance of the breath that had fanned his cheek as she revived to consciousness upon his shoulder! The expression of the countenance was familiar to him, yet, with all his searching of recollection, he could not call to mind whether it was in England or on the continent it had become so, or whether the illusion might not arise from an accidental resemblance with some favourite painting or statue.

It seemed but a moment before that his arms had enlaced the beauteous form which it was more than probable he should never again behold. But yesterday, so thoroughly in his power;—to-day, as lost to him as the morning dew evaporating in the sun! He fancied himself mocked by the united force and feebleness of his impressions. Though the dignity and purity of demeanour which, even more than her beauty, distinguished the fair stranger, forbade all deteriorating inferences, yet her acquaintance with the Duke of Buckingham, and the almost unprotected

guise in which she was traversing the streets in the dusk of evening, seemed to justify mistrust; and dearly did Lord Lovell long to feel assured of the lady's irreproachability, although the certitude must reinforce the barrier which her capricious conduct had already raised between them.

It were tedious to detail the fitful fancies of the perplexed man throughout his journey. On the second noon he reached Thrapstone; and having ascertained, by a personal encounter with the host of an inn he had frequented in boyhood with his father, that the progress of time had effaced all trace of the stripling Arthur from the presentment of Lord Lovell, he again took horse and pushed on for Lovell House, intending to obtain admission on pretence of having a subpœna to serve upon the Lady Lovell.

It was twelve years since he quitted the place; and with so much bitterness had he taught himself to regard the spot of earth inhabited by his wife, that he was not prepared for the rush of tender emotions that assailed him on entering the village. His youth, his friends, his father, seemed to rise around and call upon his name; and though the improvements effected by his lady, the school and almshouses she had erected, and the highways and byways she had created or perfected, might have perplexed a steadier memory, the scene came familiar to his mind. The first point he visited was the village church, where the old sexton was sorely scandalized at the disregard

with which the silent stranger listened to his description of the ancient tombs of the house of Lovell; his eyes having wandered therefrom towards a sarcophagus of black marble placed in the furthermost recess, and bearing only the date of the battle of Worcester. The aged man attempted, indeed, to explain that this simple record was dedicated to the memory of the late gallant lord, whose remains had been removed by stealth from Worcester, at the cost of the present lady. But his labour was lost. The visitor, after bestowing on him a liberal donation, went his way out of the church, and answered not a word.

Some short exposure to the refreshment of the air was indispensable, ere Lord Lovell sufficiently recovered himself to proceed towards the park. There was a side entrance leading direct from the church towards the house; and having tied to the landing-stile the jaded brute on which he had reached the place, Lord Lovell betook himself to a beaten path, over which the withered leaves of autumn were plenteously scattered. Ever and anon he paused to contemplate the scene around him, and obtained, through vistas of an intervening grove, glimpses of the abode of his fathers. The view seemed changed. He could have sworn that the approach from the village skirted the southern side of the grove. But the growth of twelve years necessarily imparted a different aspect to the plantations, and varied the character of the scene.

At length the cause of his perplexity became apparent. At the extremity of the beech wood, he saw clearly that the direction of the path was changed. The fatal sylvan lodge was now in view;—a new and mysterious erection, to which he had no difficulty, after Rochester's explanations, in assigning an origin. With hurried breath, he demanded of a labourer, at work in a neighbouring watercourse, whether the house were inhabited.

"It was."

"Who resided there?"

"The general."

"Was the general living there at present?"

"Ay, zure," replied the man, who did not so much as raise his eyes from his spade towards the ignorant stranger. And without pausing to take breath, or inquire the name of the "general," the infuriated Lord Lovell dashed onwards up the green knoll towards the lodge.

But whatever might be his lordship's estimation of his right of iutrusion, Stark and Sturm were of opinion that strangers had no business at Dickon's Fort during the absence of their master, who happened to have strolled up to the house; and so vehement was their defence, that it was some relief to his lordship when, just as a smart stroke from his riding wand had provoked old Sturm to fasten his fangs into the instrument, a whistle was heard, which produced the immediate submission of the infuriated

beast, and the intruder found himself interrogated by a rough voice touching his errand at Lovell House.

Planted sturdily upon his timber leg,—pipe in mouth and arms akimbo,—stood the general's old sergeant, in his half military livery, occupying the crown of the causeway, and refreshing his lordship's ears with a volley of English (clearly the King's English, not the Protector's), such as they had scarcely encountered since his secession from military life.

"Sheer off, and be cursed to ye!" cried the sergeant. "Just let his honour the general find ye worrying the dogs, and I warrant he'll make short work of having your ears nailed to the keeper's lodge, among kites, crows, and other queer carrion. Off, I say, and——blessed God, be good to me—'tis my young lord!" cried the old fellow, interrupting himself, and lowering his voice as he obtained a clearer view of the intruder; and off went the barret-cap, and away went the pipe. For in the flurry of the moment old Swatchem saw in the gentleman before him only the noble nephew of his honoured master.

"Down, Stark,—down, blackguard curs that ye are!" cried he, putting aside the hounds, and ushering onwards Lord Lovell, who, as he passively entered the lodge, tried in vain to recall to mind the singular individual by whom he was thus opportunely recog-

nized; nor was it till he had fairly installed himself in Sir Richard's barrack-room, thrown himself into the seat pressed upon him by the old sergeant, and cast his eyes upon the Guiana curiosities and miniatures of himself and his late father gracing the mantel, that the simple truth glanced at once into his mind! The veteran before him was his uncle's favourite body-servant, and his lady's supposed minion no other than the sturdy Sir Richard Lovell!

Starting from his place as this humiliating explanation burst upon him, he was about to take a precipitate departure, and disentangle himself from the snare into which he had been self-betrayed, when the sergeant's remonstrances recalled him to himself. "Long absent come at last" was not to be so lightly parted with. The vetera bade the two hounds keep watch over my lord, while he proceeded to sound the horn, which was his daily signal when the general was wanted at the fort; and the low growl with which the faithful beasts exhibited their tremendous fangs every time his lordship presumed to make movements of impatience, warned him that he had only to put a good face upon his imprisonment.

"I have waited, sir, your return, for the honour of paying my devoirs to you," said he, rising deliberately, when at length the astonished general made his appearance; "a respect which the absence of

Lady Lovell from my house at length, though tardily, enables me to tender."

But Sir Richard Lovell was a less able dissembler than his nephew. *He* at least was unable to conceal in his reply, first, his unqualified amazement, and secondly, his deep-seated displeasure. Having readily overmastered the emotion caused by the sight of Lovell's countenance, which singularly recalled the person of his lamented brother, Sir Richard gave vent to his long-suppresse indignation. His words were high in tone and meaning. He evaded no part of the question of Lord Lovell's conduct. He called it by the name he felt it to deserve; and so great was the force of eloquence imparted by passion to his address, that at the close, Lord Lovell, instead of being roused to resentment, was subdued almost to tears. Sir Richard spoke of Lady Lovell's wrongs, her patience, her sweetness, her exemplary career, her benevolence to all, her pious honour to the memory of his late father, her generous care of the maintenance of his late mother.

"She hath her reward," said Lord Lovell, with bitterness, finding his uncle at length paused for a reply. "Lady Lovell is rich in the favour of the world; *I* a beggar and an outcast, and *she* a queen in the land! Peace and prosperity are her compensations for the defection of an indifferent husband."

"They are *not* her compensations!" cried Sir

Richard, with rising choler. "Would that they were! for, God knows, the blessed creature deserves a better destiny than to pine away her youth after a cold-blooded reprobate, whose better were easily found wherever she list to cast her eyes. I swear to you, Arthur Lovell, that never do I behold that lovely woman fix her tearful eyes upon your picture, and sit gazing upon it by the hour as though transported back into her brighter dreams of youth, without feeling that to rid her of so cruel a clog upon the happiness elsewhere in store for her, I could myself lay hands upon a fellow unworthy to call her wife!"

"It is no news to me, sir," replied Lord Lovell, "that this lady hath succeeded in estranging from me the regard of those upon whose affections nature had provided me the stronger claim. So runs the fashion of the world. She hath beauty and prosperity on her side, while I——"

"Urge no such argument on *me!*" cried the indignant old man; "for it is my conscience that pronounceth against you,—Arthur, my brother's son. *My* days are numbered in the land; but were they like to be twice as many, I would yield them up a willing sacrifice for the assurance that but a span of your own would be devoted to repentance of the anguish you have inflicted on a wronged and lovely woman!"

The heart of Lovell was irresistibly touched by the unction of his kinsman's adjuration. Sir Richard

had placed the position of the deserted wife in a new light. Lord Lovell had never accustomed himself to consider her otherwise than as the gainer by her marriage. To hear her described as wronged and unhappy, as well as young and fair, afforded a new feature to the case. In her moral conduct, malice itself was unable to detect a flaw. Lord Arran, an able connoisseur, described her charms as unexcelled. Could it be true that one thus beautiful was thus attached to the shadowy image of the boy-husband to whom her childhood had been rashly plighted? Had the twelve intervening years failed to efface from the heart of the woman the impression produced upon the child of fifteen?

Detecting in the reverie into which his nephew was falling the happy influence of his address, Sir Richard resolved to pursue his advantage by conciliatory means. He proposed to him to visit the house, the grounds, the old terrace, which Anne Lovell had preserved intact in honour of the predilections of Anne Heneage; and when his lordship pleaded the indelicacy of entering as a surreptitious guest the mansion to whose possession he was preferring claims at law, every objection was overruled by the positiveness of his uncle.

"You are here, man, by my invitation," said he; "and since you state yourself to have travelled post from town for the purpose of testifying respect towards your nearest kinsman, prove at least your

regard for him by complying with the sole request it may be ever his to make you. You must dine with me, Arthur, ay, 'odsdeath, and you must *sleep* under my roof! Dickon's Fort is not accountable for its guests to Lovell House; and even were it so, *who* will recognize your person? But for his subsequent knowledge of you at St. Germains, the old Stump, my serving man, had never discovered you; and he shall be admonished anon to keep his discoveries to himself. Come, sir, lend me your arm, and we shall visit together the chamber where your father first showed you to me sleeping by your mother's side, and wept as he told me that he was father of a son!"

"Little imagining that you would one day cease to consider that son your nephew, and transfer your favour to a stranger and an alien," observed Lord Lovell, deeply moved.

"With his own hand, and perhaps in the last words he ever penned in this world, did my brother commend that stranger to my dearest affections," cried the general. "Stay!" he continued, unlocking a strong drawer of his scrutoire, and producing the letter addressed to him from Dalesdene upon Arthur's wedding-day, "behold the warrant of my conduct."

Having in silence perused the solemn apostrophe, Arthur resigned himself without further struggle to the invitations of his uncle, and seemed to give way

with pleasure to the emotions excited in his bosom by revisiting the home of his childhood. His father seemed to walk visibly by his side,—his father seemed to breathe audibly in his ear. The letter he had just perused was as a voice from the dead, awakening a thousand tender associations.

The sun was setting with a mellow light over the park and gardens. The flowers sent forth a faint melancholy autumnal fragrance. The year and the hour were in their decline ; and as he sauntered beside the veteran through pathways every shrub of which had a recollection of his childhood attached to its decaying branches, Lord Lovell recalled mournfully to mind that he had attained to middle age, that his brightest days were gone, and gone without leaving a single cheering trace, a single honourable testimony. He had suffered his antipathies to obtain too great a predominance over his destiny. He had suffered his whole career to be marred and withered at the instigation of the irrational and empty arrogance of his mother. Youth and beauty had wooed him into sorts with fortune ; yet he had chosen to remain a vagrant and a beggar, to prove his resentment of the arbitrary disposal of his hand, and his superiority to all commixture with plebeian blood.

There are moments in the life of every proud man, when the sacrifices exacted by his rapacious idol stand forth trebly apparent, and convict him as a dupe.

Lord Lovell saw his wasted years arrayed in judgment before him, and, were it not for the transient glimpse he had obtained of the fair but insipid face of his wife, might still have been tempted to request the good offices of the general as mediator between them. Had Lady Lovell possessed a fiftieth part of the attractions of the mysterious protégée of the Duke of Buckingham, he would have cheerfully confessed his fault, and by atonement secured the happiness of his future life. Throughout the evening a heavy oppression sat upon his spirits, which induced Sir Richard to flatter himself that some such project was brooding in the mind of his nephew ; and when they parted for the night, the good uncle, who, in spite of former provocations, experienced a natural yearning of the heart towards the latest scion of his house with whom he could talk over its early troubles, parted with him at the door of the guest's chamber which divided with his own the upper floor of Dickon's Fort, satisfied that the reflections of the night would complete the charm, and that on the morrow some accommodation would be proposed by Lord Lovell. The point had as yet been expressly avoided by his lordship, just as the general had declined all allusion to the present measures and position of the king and court.

They had sat late ; the old knight choosing to moisten the details of their talk with copious potations of sack-posset, the fumes of which rendered his sleep as

heavy as his heart was light. It was nearly half an hour later than his usual time of rising that the sudden entrance of the sergeant into his chamber caused him to rub his eyes and ask tidings of his guest.

"An express from her ladyship's honour!" replied old Swatchem, who would have given precedence to Lady Lovell over royalty itself. And delivering a letter into the general's hands, he informed him that a special post from London had that moment alighted at the stables. The seal and handwriting of his beloved niece! No wonder the veteran's outcry for his spectacles was so loud and earnest.

"It has been hitherto your dearest wish, my kind uncle and friend,"— ran the tenour of the letter,— "that your seclusion should be undisturbed, and your name unmingled with the list of claimants upon the justice and bounty of the king. But from our mutual affection and the strictness of your retirement at Lovell House, have arisen (would you believe it?) rumours injurious to my honour! Lord Lovell, ungenerous in his surmises touching this matter, as in every other movement towards me, hath caused it to be reported throughout the court that a nameless paramour is entertained in my household; till, in the midst of a thousand favours from the queen, I find myself, on a sudden, coldly looked on. I entreat, therefore, your release from my engagement to refrain from naming you to his Majesty. Suffer me to give such

explanation as I may;—and believe me, in haste, but in all love and honour,

"Your dutiful niece, ANNE
(scarcely justified in signing herself)
LOVELL."

"A paramour! her honour tarnished for my sake!" cried the choleric old man; and while throwing on his roquelaure, a thousand imprecations against his nephew issued incoherently from his lips. "Where is this fellow—this slanderer? Ho! Swatchem, I say, and be damned to you! is my nephew yet stirring?"

"*Stirring*, your honour?" reiterated the sergeant, stupefied by his master's sudden outburst of passion.

"Bid him attend me! 'Tis his business to pay me his morning devoirs, not mine to wait upon his toilet," roared the general, falling almost breathless into a chair. "*This*, then, was the motive of the pitiful varlet's journey to Lovell House! He came but as a spy to pry into the secrets of her household! The glozing knave, with his pretences of duty to his old uncle! But he shall know my notions of his proceedings! Why comes he not? Didst give him my message, stockfish?" he continued, perceiving that the old sergeant stood gaping open-mouthed at his violence.

"Verily I had needed a faster nag than my timber

shank to have overtaken his lordship!" replied Swatchem, striking his wooden leg stoutly upon the floor. "His lordship was off an hour before daylight, and is three posts off by this time."

"Off! And you suffered him to quit the house without so much as the decency of leave-taking?"

"I thought the matter was settled atwixt you, to spare your honour untimely disturbance," replied the sergeant. "It was not for the like of me to interfere with his lordship's proceedings, more especially within bounds of his lordship's own place of Lovell House."

"'T is *not* his place. How often must I explain to you, blockhead, that the house and all that it containeth are the inheritance of my lady-niece?"

"Be it in sooth?" replied Swatchem, as, with pretended carelessness, he proceeded in his capacity of valet-de-chambre to prepare the toilet of his master, on whose ill-humour his habitual mode of inflicting punishment was by attacking the rights of Lady Lovell. "In course your honour knows best; only, having heard you so often declare, general, that woman be the weaker vessel, bound to submit herself to her spouse, a nonentity in the eye of the law, and so forth, I fancied——"

"Keep your foolish fancies to yourself, sir! Lay out my riding-suit, and let Robin Groom bring round Tinkler and Bannerman to the door within half an hour's space!" cried the general. "I am for Lon-

don, so have a careful eye to things, sirrah, during my absence."

"Ho, ho, ho! Your honour post a journey at this time of the day, with the roads as heavy as the mains of a Guelderland farm? I hope, general, you do n't fancy I am going to let you make an end of yourself without benefit of clergy? What would my lady say to me, who gave your honour into my charge at parting? 'Swatchem,' quoth she, 'have good care of my uncle during my absence,' just for all the world as your honour was pleased to say just now, 'Sirrah!' quoth you, 'you 'll have an eye to——'"

"Keep your old tongue still, or 't will be the worse for you!" cried Sir Richard, evidently in no mood to be trifled with. And long before the general's frugal breakfast was despatched, his esquire of the body had completed, without further comment or expostulation, the preparations for his journey.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lord Lovell's sleepless night had, in truth, according to the general's anticipation, been fruitful in honourable resolves. But he chose that the result should appear the working of his spontaneous will, not the effect of either his uncle's bullying or his uncle's persuasions. On this account had he evaded, by precipitate departure, all further intercourse with the old gentleman. His object was to reach London, so as to redeem his pledge and demand satisfaction of the Duke of Buckingham, after having freely, and with ample confession of error, withdrawn his suit for restitution against the trustees of Anne, his wife.

On reaching his lodging, however, after a journey still more disquieting than that which took him into Northamptonshire, Lord Lovell discovered that he had a duty anterior to his business with the duke. A message from the king, requiring his immediate presence at Whitehall, had been delivered that even-

ing to his servant by a personage no less consequential than Baptist May; and having refreshed himself with a bath and a change of dress, he proceeded to obey the summons. He had the satisfaction of learning, on his arrival at the palace, that the king, being slightly indisposed, had not proceeded to the playhouse, as was his custom in these occasional visits to town during the non-residence of the court; but having passed the guard-room and ante-chamber, his lordship's further progress was arrested by an intimation from the usher of the presence that he must wait,—"that his Majesty was engaged."

"I come by appointment," replied Lord Lovell, with impatient hauteur.

"So doth the lady, sir, who now enjoys the honour of an audience," replied the usher, to whom the person of Lovell, a late arrival and rare visitant at court, happened to be unknown.

"Have the goodness at least to announce my name to the king," persisted Lovell, advancing resolutely into the gallery preceding the royal closet. Startled by the wilfulness of his deportment, the man first demanded, and straightway announced to his Majesty, the title of the petulant intruder.

"'T is well," cried the king, in a voice so loud as to be distinctly heard by Lovell. "Bid his lordship enter! I crave leave of your ladyship to remain present during our interview."

Surprised to find that the fair one favoured with a

private audience at that hour was neither Mistress Nelly nor Miss Stewart, but apparently some woman of condition, Lord Lovell advanced respectfully into the presence of his sovereign; and the surprise with which he discovered that the lady honoured with a chair of state opposite to that of Charles was none other than the mysterious beauty of the sedan chair, prevented his even noticing the unusual coldness of the reception bestowed upon him by the king. Nay, his own obeisances of ceremony were somewhat curtailed of their fair proportions by his eagerness to infuse deference into the salutation by which he trusted to demonstrate to the lovely stranger his delight at finding himself once more in her presence. But his reverences were as haughtily received by the lady as by Charles. Nothing could be more coldly distant than the demeanour which belied the blushes mantling on her cheek.

"In consequence of my absence from town, sire, I have been only this moment honoured with your Majesty's commands," said Lord Lovell, embarrassed by the stateliness of the king and his companion.

"No matter," replied Charles, who remained standing after the entrance of Lord Lovell. "Your absence from town sufficed the purpose of my message. A challenge, I understand, hath passed between your lordship and the Duke of Buckingham. Let the matter, my lord, be instantly disposed of. Our starchamber privilege may be abrogated; yet

I will have no offence to good morals or public example offered within the precincts of my court. I have already signified to his grace, and I now signify to your lordship, my pleasure that the affair should drop. The Duke of Buckingham's safety is too dear to me to have it perilled in a worthless quarrel."

"I can well understand, sire," replied Lovell with warmth, hazarding a look towards the lovely countenance whose eyes were now cast down as if to avoid meeting the indignant glances of his own, "at *whose* gentle intercession this impunity is granted to his grace. *You*, madam," he continued, pointedly addressing her, "who have thought proper to communicate to his Majesty my appeal to the Duke of Buckingham, must lend your attention to the cause of quarrel ere you suggest its peaceful adjustment."

"Is it your ladyship's pleasure that my Lord Lovell proceed in his explanation?" demanded the king, in a tone of such deprecating courtesy as caused the blood to tingle in the cheeks of Lovell. For the stately bend of assent vouchsafed was such as Queen Bess might have bestowed from the highest summit of her royal dignity upon some crawling parasite!

"In a word, sire," cried Lovell, piqued out of his self-possession, "though compelled to submit to your Majesty's decree against any hostile encounter with the Duke of Buckingham within the precincts of the court ——"

"Within the precincts of the British dominions," sternly amended the king.

"I must be permitted to state that I shall hold the Duke of Buckingham, and proclaim him in all reputable societies, a dishonoured man, should he refuse to cross the water with me, and grant me, at Ambleteuse or Calais, the satisfaction which your Majesty does not appear to consider due to me on English ground. The Duke of Buckingham, who had devised and uttered a vile calumny upon the lady bearing my name, is accountable to me for the offence on every other spot of earth than the one where he is sheltered from chastisement by the partiality of his sovereign."

The amazement of Charles at this bold address seemed to amount almost to confusion of mind; for he looked from Lovell to his fair companion, and from the lady to Lovell, as if requiring further explanation.

"You were witness, madam," resumed his lordship, addressing the former, "to my pledge to his grace to prove within three days the groundlessness of certain scandals. The means were then out of my power. Disunited by family grievances from the lady whose fair fame he had presumed to discredit,—nay, having for twelve years banished myself from her very presence,—it was impossible for me to afford demonstration of facts of which my feelings prompted the assertion. I then surmised this gallant gentle-

man, this *preux chevalier*, this Buckingham, to be a liar and a slanderer. I now affirm it of my knowledge, and, as the unworthy husband of an injured woman, will prove it upon his person, or hold myself faithless as himself."

"Am I to understand then, my lord, that you accuse the Duke of Buckingham as author of the defamations of Lady Lovell, supposed to have originated with yourself?" demanded the king, after a momentary pause, which seemed to enlighten his perplexities.

"I had it, sire, from the lips of Lord Rochester, that his grace, on returning from the errand to Northamptonshire sanctioned by your Majesty's authority and my own unjustifiable connivance, did assert in all companies that my Lady Lovell entertained a disbanded captain as her paramour! This talk regarded too nearly the honour of my house to be overlooked. I have visited the lady's retirement, sire; I have visited the disbanded captain ——"

"There *is* a lover in the case, then?" interrupted the king, glancing archly towards the fair protégée of the Duke of Bucks.

"As true a lover as ever defended the cause of an injured and virtuous woman!" cried Lovell; "a lover whose testimony to the virtues of the lady bearing my name hath wrung my heart with anguish. His name may produce a consciousness equally painful in that of your Majesty. Nevertheless, in justice to my

Lady Lovell, I must presume to allude to so faithful and neglected a servant of your Majesty as my uncle Sir Richard Lovell."

"Old Dickon still alive? The hot-headed general a resident at Lovell House?" interrupted the king, evidently sincere in his outcry of surprise. "Faith, I 'm glad on 't! I owe him reparation for much forgetfulness, to say nothing of the interest and capital of the heavens above know how many thousand florins! But why have I been kept ignorant of this?"

"I leave it to the veteran and the lady, sire, to reply to the question," said his lordship, fancying that it was to himself the inquiry was addressed. "Meanwhile, I crave your Majesty and this lady to admit me justified in my resentment against the individual honoured by your protection."

Again the king eyed a moment in silence the countenances of Lord Lovell and his fair friend.

"I presume not to answer for this lady," cried Charles, a smile overspreading, for the first time during the interview, his sallow features; "but, for my own part, I scarcely understand such vehement advocacy of the cause of one against whom you have a suit pending, and have been railing, without rhyme or reason, for these twelve years past! Nay, sit, madam!" cried the king, laying his hand upon the silken robe of his lovely visitor, who now made a movement to rise and depart. "You, who have re-

quired my intervention to suppress this duel, are bound to listen to every detail tending to its justification."

"They are not such as ought to be unacceptable to a female ear," observed Lord Lovell with dignity, "for they purport to elevate the character and honour of the sex. That my antipathy to the lady bearing my name arose from the lessons of pride of a mother inheriting the high blood and lofty spirit of the Digbys, your Majesty, so familiar with the pride of that unhappy family, hath not now to learn. My own selfish presumption confirmed the error. My character for consistency seemed pledged to maintain the animosity my petulant boyhood had avouched. I closed my heart and understanding against the claims of the most meritorious of her sex, only to prove myself an idiot, undeserving the favour of Providence. The result hath been to myself a life of recklessness and care; to *her* a happy security from companionship with one so graceless! And how hath this lady avenged herself upon my misdoings? By generosity to my unfortunate mother, by respect to the memory of my father, by dutiful affection to the poor old general, by careful stewardship over the estates I had lacked grace to govern. The most illustrious of noble matrons could not have more graced her station than the patient creature whom my obstinacy so long presumed to disparage. Sire, I own my fault. Already I have despatched instructions to my lawyers to with-

draw all proceedings against her, admitting, in full court, my consciousness of the injustice of my cause; nor does there exist the reparation I would not offer to Lady Lovell, short of pretending to those tender distinctions of which I hold myself unworthy."

"But if the lady herself judged you deserving?" cried the king, while Lovell, following his glance towards the countenance of his fair friend, beheld there so strange an admixture of blushes and tears, confusion and curiosity, that the vanity of man instantly suggested the possibility of her being interested in hearing him proclaim his indifference towards Lady Lovell.

"Had your Majesty deigned last week to make the inquiry," he replied, "I might have answered, 'Heaven send her forgiveness of my faults and blindness to her wrongs.' But it were *now* a breach of sincerity, did I pretend to more than to render justice to her virtues."

"You would willingly, in short, still dissolve your marriage?" demanded the king, exultingly.

"Never, sire! unless such a measure should appear essential to the happiness of one whose conduct is an honour to my name. It is my misfortune, that within one little week, a view of her person hath decided that the beauty so commended of the world is devoid of all charm or attraction in my eyes; while in the person of another"—(involuntarily the eyes of Lovell glanced towards the dulcinea of the Duke of

Buckingham)—"I have beheld concentrated those graces which exalt the soul of man to frenzy, or reduce it to the most abject submission."

"You have seen Lady Lovell since her sojourn in the metropolis?" demanded Charles, with surprise. "Yet methinks that from her Majesty's fête"——

"I absented myself, sire, at your command," replied Lord Lovell, with dignity. "It was a brief encounter in the park, which enabled me to decide that her mild and featureless beauty could produce no impression on my heart."

"Every man to his taste!" cried the king, no longer able to repress a laugh. "I have only further to inquire whether, if the Duke of Buckingham should retract his aspersions upon the fame of this 'mild and featureless lady,' you are disposed to retract your cartel?"

"That portion of the case I beseech your Majesty to leave to *my* adjustment," cried the lovely friend of the duke, whose cheeks were now flushed to a permanent crimson, and whose impatience to depart was no longer controllable even by the authority of the king. "Now that I am acquainted with the cause of dispute, I pledge myself to make such explanations to his grace as will ensure the utmost satisfaction to my Lord Lovell."

She rose, curtseyed with graceful respect, and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIX.

Lord Lovell, forgetful that the doors of the closet were kept by the usher and page in waiting, and that another formal-looking individual in flowing peruke and suit of sable velvet stood in attendance without, involuntarily moved towards the door as attendant upon Lady Lovell's rapid passage.

A word from the king recalled him to himself. Instead of commanding him to escort the lady to her carriage, or see that her people were in attendance, his Majesty commenced a string of interrogatories touching Sir Richard Lovell,—his health, happiness, prospects, and intentions.

"How comes it that the old knight hath never visited us since our return?" demanded Charles.

"Your Majesty hath, perhaps, too openly resented the importunity of needy cavaliers," replied Lovell. "Sir Richard could not presume to pay his court without an express invitation."

"An invitation! when I knew not whether to address it to heaven or hell, or the intermediary stage!" cried the king. "Since the old man gave no signs of life, I was bound to conclude him dead. *He*, at least, could not return the compliment. Old Dick was scarcely ignorant of the existence of a man called Charles II."

"Nor your Majesty of the fidelity of his service to Charles I. The general is proud and susceptible, and fancies that some slight portion of the favour lavished by your Majesty upon Buckingham, Rochester, and Buckhurst, might be spared to the memory of his brother."

"He is right!" said the king, with a countenance suddenly overcast. "Between the claims of the dead and living, and my own scarcity of time and means, I seem to be converting more friends into enemies by neglect, than enemies into friends by favour. In this case, atonement is happily in my power. Pr'ythee signify to Sir Richard Lovell my desire of immediately renewing acquaintanceship with so old a friend. Or, stay,—it is my own hand that must repair my fault." And hastening to the table, the king rapidly indited a few lines expressive of the goodnatured regrets by which, at that moment, his fickle nature was inspired. It was a comfort to him when Lord Lovell, in respectfully taking leave, pledged himself to have the letter conveyed to his uncle.

"All then is well. At length—at length—all will

be happily arranged!" cried Mistress Corbet, when Lady Lovell, on her return home that evening, communicated to her attached friends the singular incidents which had befallen her, and the strange misconception perplexing the mind of Lord Lovell.

"So far, at least," replied her ladyship, trying to calm back her excited spirits into their habitual repose, "that my lord is convinced of the utter malignancy of the reports affecting my reputation."

"And of unsoundness of the plea affecting your ladyship's estates," interposed the worthy Enoch, to whom the quashing of a costly lawsuit afforded one of the happiest features of the case.

"'T is neither of suits nor duels I am thinking," persisted the good gouvernante. "*These* are transitory evils. *I* look to the permanent happiness of my child. Lord Lovell avows his repentance and betrays his passion; and years of domestic comfort are in store to repay the mortifications of her girlhood."

"From whence are they to arise?" calmly demanded Lady Lovell. "Is it to suffice that the man who, for twelve years, hath aggrieved and insulted me, shall cast his eyes upon the house I have governed with prudence to render me tardy justice? What knoweth Lord Lovell of me to-day more than yesterday was to be known, had he deigned to take cognizance of my conduct? And for the passion wherewith you compliment me, behold and admire what

were his sense of justice towards his wife, had the fair face which his sickly fancy despiseth been, as he supposes, that of the Lady Lovell, rather than of her gentle friend? Alas! dear mother, my vanity may have cause to triumph in these recent events, but my peace of mind is scarcely less shadowed than before!"

"Trifle not, dear lady, with the relentings of Providence," interposed the demure auditor, who had never before pretended to play the admonitor with his patroness. "The evils we have so long deplored are passing away. Lord Lovell avows himself sensible to your merits — sensible to your charms— and——"

"Long and severe must be the probation which avouches his stedfastness of purpose and feeling, ere I give ear to the suggestions of either my friends or my heart," replied Lady Lovell, mildly, but decisively. "My self-respect, no less than the dignity of my sex, is involved in this thing."

"Make no rash resolves," cried Mistress Corbet, dreading some irrevocable resolution. "There is a soul of goodness in things evil. Lord Lovell's contentious opposition hath driven you perforce into your fitting sphere. You are appreciated, loved, worshipped, by those to whom you had otherwise remained a mark of derision."

"Of what import to me the favour of the court?" exclaimed Lady Lovell, impatiently. "To-morrow

(if the matters connected with this abandoned plea may be so speedily wound up) I shall return to Lovell House, to the retreat for which, till my right of possession was invaded, I knew not half my attachment. Henceforth my life will be the calmer that I am secure from the malpractices of my husband; but with this impunity begin and end the advantages resulting from my harassing visit to the metropolis."

On the morrow, however, long ere Enoch Shum had gathered up his documents, and scattered forth his disbursements preparatory to departure, arrived the good general to tender to his niece's appeal a reply no longer needful. It was with difficulty Lady Lovell could obtain his patient attention to her assurances that an *amende honorable* had been already made by her lord, that he had withdrawn his accusations and allegations, that the duel and the lawsuit were quashed for ever.

Still, Sir Richard burned to wreak upon the offender the explosion of his wrath; to revile him for having stolen ere daybreak from his gates; to reproach him that neither kinsmanly eloquence nor sack-posset had sufficed to attenuate his stubborn heart. To calm the veteran's irritation, Lady Lovell acquainted him with the compunctious visitings of King Charles's conscience on hearing mention of his name; and though at first the old man pished and pshawed away the tale, and to every further allusion to the regard

avouched towards him by his sovereign replied by a torrent of invectives against the ingratitude and fickleness of the Stuarts, he expressed, in the sequel, an earnest desire for a few minutes' colloquy with his nephew; and, since decorum forbade that Lord Lovell should be invited into a mansion tenanted by his wife, it was settled that a link should forthwith attend Sir Richard to his lordship's lodgings at Whitehall.

The only particulars connected with her recent arrangements which Lady Lovell saw fit to withhold from the rash old gentleman, were the curious blunders entertained by her wayward lord touching the identity of his consort.

"Too early seen unknown, and known too late," she did not choose to expose herself to Sir Richard's railleries touching the passion she had excited in her own person, and cooled in that of another; and he accordingly reached his nephew's domicile, divided between anxiety to learn the discourse held concerning him by the king, and to promote some expectancy of eventful reunion between the wedded pair.

But though on the first point his resentments were speedily mollified by Lord Lovell's recital of the letter indited by his lord the king, his nephew's obstinate opposition to all proposal of further accommodation with his wife stung him to the quick.

"I admit," cried the young lord, "that she may be as you describe her,—gentle, modest, wise,— all that wives and women ought to be. Full justice, public

and private, am I willing to render to Lady Lovell. But, as regards the tribute of my affections, sir, I am bound to protest that my fancies are engaged elsewhere. I have seen the woman unto whom, were she poor in every gift wherewith your lady niece aboundeth, I would still dedicate the earnest tribute of my affections."

"And where are we to look for this all-peerless dame?" demanded Sir Richard, with a sneer. "Is it some Statira of the playhouses, or——"

"I know no more, sir, than yourself," cried Lord Lovell, "and make it even a point of conscience to refrain from inquiring. Maid, wife, or widow, *my* pretensions were alike fruitless, and I spare myself the vexation of defeat."

"You do wisely, Arthur," sternly replied his uncle; "for it were fitting retribution that you learned, by experience, to appreciate the bitter pangs of unrequited love! If, however, the wanton to whom you have pledged the worthless gift of your attachment——"

"Speak heedfully of her, sir, or speak not at all!" interrupted his lordship. "I pledge my life upon her worthiness. She is only too fair, too pure, too all-excelling for the place and company in which we have been fated to encounter."

Thwarted by the young man's pertinacity, Sir Richard returned to the question of the king. Although the royal message had crossed him on the

road, Lord Lovell assured him that were the secret of his arrival in town to transpire at Whitehall, his absence from court must be interpreted into wanton disrespect.

"The king holds a levee to-morrow, previous to his return to Hampton," observed his lordship. "It were well that we both attended, in forestalment of misreport."

"I am unprovided for such a ceremony," said the general, doggedly. "My uniform lies moth-fretted at Dickon's Fort. Wait till I am fitly accoutred to parade, like old Ormond, the old age of a general of Charles I., in presence of the gimcrack court of Charles II."

"To-morrow sir, or never!" was the impetuous Lovell's reply. "On the day following I sail from Harwich to Helvoetsluys. Bound to no spot of earth, I would fain visit the cities of the empire, and forget, in hurriedness of travel, the curse that desecrates my hearth. There are matters stirring on the Danube which tempt me to trail a pike in Hungary, rather than mope away my days in obscure poverty, mortified by the gibes and bravery of more prosperous courtiers. To-morrow, sir, at noon (since I may not wait upon you under the roof of one who for all our sakes shall never be insulted by my presence), I shall entreat you to take me on your way to Whitehall, that for the last time the two last of our house may abide together in presence of their sovereign."

It was observed with regret by Lady Lovell and her little household, that during the remainder of the day the general appeared harassed and dispirited. It was idle to attribute his discomfiture wholly to the fatigues of his journey. Vexations were evidently weighing on his mind. The mingled feelings with which he was prepared to enter the presence of the king, for whom he had suffered wounds, imprisonment, insult, confiscation, were gradually concentrating into a resolve to appeal to his Majesty's authority against the self-expatriation of Arthur Lovell.

The over-wearied veteran retired to rest early, and rose late. Such preparations as the time would admit were hastily made by Lady Lovell for his appearance at court; and rich point and sweeping plumes threw a grace over the tarnished doublet of the proud old soldier.

"I must have my cavalier of Lovell House do honour to his lady-love," said his niece as with a melancholy smile she fastened on his sword-knot and scarf. "Thou art the only knight, dear uncle, I am fated to arm for the field. But, thank Heaven, to *thee* I can, in all reliance of spirit, say, 'Go forth, and prosper.'"

Avoiding the display of having her equipage in attendance to convey her uncle and lord to court, Lady Lovell had provided a coach of rich but simple appearance, into which Sir Richard threw himself in a fit of distemperature that might have better

become the arrival of a cart purporting to draw him to Tyburn Fields.

"This is a sorry errand," was his peevish musing, as he entered the narrow street in which Lord Lovell had taken up his residence, in the immediate vicinity of Westminster Hall. "God send the fellow keep me not waiting! I am in no mood for further harassment or care."

But, so far from keeping him waiting, a message was delivered by his lordship's Italian valet to Sir Richard's lacqueys, entreating that the general would proceed without delay to court; "Lord Lovell, having been unexpectedly called out of town, was unable to have the honour of bearing him company."

"This is some damnable evasion!—I read a lie in yonder sneaking varlet's looks!" exclaimed the general, tumbling forth from the coach. "Show me to my chamber, sirrah! Either Lovell hath *not* left town, or he hath left his service to me in writing."

In utter consternation, the man now entreated Sir Richard to forbear from forcing his way into the house.

"What mischiefs are afoot, that I may not enter?" cried the general, threatening annihilation to the terrified Neapolitan. "Is your lord under arrest, or in assignation, or mad, or drunk?"

And, pushing aside the trembling Mateo, he pursued his way towards the chamber in which on the previous day he had visited his nephew. But at the

door stood a grave-looking personage, calmly interdicting all access to the room.

"A bailiff, by all that's damnable! I guessed as much!" cried the general, crushing the crown of his rich beaver by the vehemence of his gesticulation.

"The surgeons are at this moment examining the wound," observed the stranger in a solemn whisper; "should it be declared mortal, the duke your master must instantly speed into concealment; for already 't is known that this duel hath been persisted in despite his Majesty's absolute interdiction; and on his lordship's demise a price would probably be placed on the head of his grace of Buckingham."

The agitated, the almost convulsed aspect of the old gentleman, instantly avouched that so far from being an emissary of the duke sent to watch the course of events in the habitation of the dying man, he was a near kinsman or friend of the sufferer; and rashly as the surgeon's mate had previously announced the worst to Sir Richard Lovell, did he now admit him into the chamber.

Three professional men were around the bed, one of whom was engaged in a cautious removal of bandages from the side of the sufferer. Faint and exhausted as he was, Lord Lovell turned his head at the sound of his uncle's irrepressible exclamation of horror.

"Forgive me," said he, feebly extending his hand.

"I trusted that the unlucky affair which weighed yesterday upon my hands would have been so adjusted as to leave me this day at your disposal. To-morrow I was to have quitted England! What matters it to any living soul that my journey is to be of wider limit? My last act hath been an act of atonement. Buckingham hath retracted his slanders."

"Fie on a reparation obtained at such a cost!" cried the old man, clasping his hands; and the surgeons, seeing him incapable of the smallest self-control, insisted on removing him from the chamber during the ensuing operation.

"Will he die?" demanded Sir Richard, in a low stern voice, when, at the expiration of half an hour, the chief surgeon issued gravely from Lord Lovell's chamber, and traversed the apartment in which he had taken refuge.

"My hopes are slighter than they were this morning," replied the professional oracle, without moving a muscle of his countenance;—"nevertheless, art is powerful. Nature is great against us, but art——"

"Be —— in thy company!" cried Sir Richard, disgusted by his callous sententiousness. "Will he die?" reiterated he, seizing the arm of the operating surgeon, who now followed the steps of his superior.

"The present danger is not imminent," he replied, perceiving that his commander-in-chief was out of hearing. "His lordship's constitution is vigorous.

If his mind can be kept calm, and his body free from fever——"

The entrance of No. 3 and his instruments warned the second in command that he was overstepping his functions. But Sir Richard's worst apprehensions were relieved. The case was not altogether hopeless. Clasping with emotion the hand of the merciful chirurgeon who had scorned to increase his own importance at the expense of the feelings of a fellow-creature, the general sank back into a chair, and, the moment the scientific slaughterers had closed the door, gave free course to his tears.

CHAPTER XX.

To keep calm the mind and cool the frame of a man struggling with the contending passions of love and hate, is no such easy task! The impossibility of coming to an amicable arrangement with the Duke of Buckingham had arisen less from his grace's reluctance to do justice to the fame of Lady Lovell, than from Lord Lovell's jealousy of the influence exercised by his grace over the mind of the lovely stranger,—a jealousy which rendered him fractious, overbearing, and unjust; and the same frailty which had urged him on to the duel, now augmented his danger.

Lord Lovell was furious to find himself pinned to an untimely deathbed by the superior address of the man to whose protection the beauteous stranger had retreated from his own. It was afflicting enough to have his plans of departure impeded,—to have his defeat at arms rumoured abroad by the same breath which circulated the withdrawal of his claims and

accusations against his wife;—but it was doubly so to surmise that Buckingham was figuring in the eyes of the loveliest of her sex as triumphant over his rashness and lack of swordsmanship. On the return of the surgeons to the sick-bed, beside which the general had installed himself, even the most sanguine of them shook his head. That night the patient became delirious. Next morning they avowed his case to be desperate.

Never till then had the general been aware how ardently his hopes were fixed upon the reformation of his nephew. Never had he suspected how sanguine were his expectations of an eventual reconciliation between Arthur and his wife. As he gazed upon the flushed cheek and listened to the frenzied outcries of the man to whose countenance fever imparted supernatural beauty, he had scarcely fortitude to reflect that this frail relic of mortality was the last of his time-honoured race; that the name of Lovell was going down into the grave, that *he* was to be the survivor, not only of his brother's son, but of the mouldering fabric of his house!

It was indispensable to apprize his niece of the afflicting cause that detained him from home. Sir Richard even felt it his duty to acquaint her that her enemy was on his deathbed,—already deprived of reason, and soon to be deprived of life.

Within an hour she was sharing with Sir Richard Lovell his painful task; and what hireling nurse

would have fulfilled with half the zeal the duties to which she devoted herself? With patient self-command she ministered to the wants of the unhappy being who lay stretched before her as if in atonement of her wrongs, and who, even in his delirium, seemed to distinguish the softness of her touch and the adroitness of her services. Amid the tortures he endured, it was *her* voice only that could recall him to tranquillity. In the darkened chamber of death, her person, even had he been capable of observation, was undistinguishable. The surgeons and servants were taught, at her desire, by Sir Richard, to regard her as nurse; and more than once they congratulated the general on the good woman's singular intelligence and care.

Often when, after the dressing of his wound, the sufferer sank into a state of collapse every moment of which threatened to be his last, the old soldier attempted to lead her from the bed, beside which she was kneeling, that she might be spared the spectacle of her husband's dying agonies. But the good creature would not be persuaded. The restoratives, administered by her hand, might once more revive him; and how could she desert the one so abandoned of all the world?

It was a rich reward for this devotion when, as she reclined, in the dead of night, on a pallet at the foot of the bed, she heard the unhappy being invoke, in his intervals of pain, the name of his wife, with many

a passionate avowal of cruelty and folly; then, seeming to live over again his interview with the lovely protégée of Buckingham, he once more offered her his protection, appealed against her mistrust, and implored her to reveal herself to the truest and most impassioned of lovers. Amid threats and imprecations against the favoured Buckingham, his voice died away into extinction, till Anne Lovell trembled and wept with alarm lest she should have heard it for the last time,—lest the erring man should be already precipitated into the dread abyss of eternity.

Great was her joy when the morning light, struggling into the chamber, showed her that he did but sleep; and though his brow was now contracted with pain, and his features wasted, yet in that altered countenance she beheld all that remained to her of the visions of her youth. How she watched every change of countenance—how she listened to every quickening breath! When Sir Richard arrived to relieve her from her guard, it was to *her*, rather than the surgeons, he turned for an account of the patient; and when towards evening she protested that there was an amendment, it was in vain the doctors continued to assert that the danger was immediate.

That night, during the third watch, her opinion was confirmed by a brief interval of reason vouchsafed to the sufferer.

"Who is beside me?" he suddenly inquired, as if waking from a deep sleep.

"I, sir, — your nurse!" replied a gentle voice, which appeared strangely grateful to his ear.

"I have a kind and considerate nurse," he faintly replied. "I never miss you from my side. Surely my head has been wandering? Tell me, where am I? Pr'ythee, was not the Duke of Buckingham here anon? Was there none with him? Has no person approached me but yourself?"

"Only your lordship's kinsman, General Lovell," faltered his agitated wife.

"Where is Sir Richard?—let me see Sir Richard."

"The old gentleman is gone home for the night," she replied, unwilling to disturb the general's rest, or her own enjoyment of so happy a moment.

"*Home!*" reiterated the sick man, in a troubled voice. "Ay, home to her who is more than friend or daughter to him! Every one hath a home—every one a friend but *me*." And once more he relapsed into reverie.

"Speak to me, good nurse," said he, at length, stretching out his hand over the coverlid in search of the comforting touch of human sympathy. "Your mild voice consoles me. But for *you*, I should be left to die alone. At some future time, nurse, cherish the recollection that your kindness cheered the last anguish of a friendless, helpless man; deserted by all the world,—deserted as a just punishment of his waywardness and pride. When I am gone, pr'ythee hie to Lady Lovell, and tell her this. Bear her a

lock of my hair (the only gift in my power to bestow), as a token that I am gone. Tell her how well you served me, and she will reward you, for her heart and hand are generous as the open day. Bid her deal mercifully with my memory; and say how dear a comfort it was to my dying moments that I resigned my life in her defence. You are weeping, good nurse," he resumed, when he found that his attendant made no answer to his appeal. "You must be good and gentle-hearted to shed these tears for a stranger,—a stranger whose life hath been a curse to all his kin. Draw nearer, I pray you, and shred a tress of hair from my brow. I would not that, when it is borne to my poor Anne, the lock should be damp and heavy with the dews of death."

Complying in agonized silence, Lady Lovell could scarcely refrain from imprinting a kiss of peace upon his head,—scarcely refrain from discovering herself. But that the agitation of such a moment must shake the last sands from his expiring glass, she would fain have thrown herself by Lord Lovell's side, and sobbed out assurances of forgiveness and love.

A happier feeling, however, soon inspired her with caution. The crisis of danger was announced by the surgeons to be past. Lord Lovell's mind became free from illusions; the fever subsided; and it was clear that the disguised nurse must depart also. The patient was accordingly informed by Sir Richard that his faithful attendant was gone to fulfil another en-

gagement. "God prosper her, for verily her care hath been a benediction to me!" was his only comment. But every hour he missed her more and more, fretting unceasingly after her prompt and tender vigilance. "It may seem a weakness," said he one day to General Lovell, "but, so long as that good woman abided here, I experienced the indescribable charm of female companionship. There were times when I could have sworn that a voice was sounding in my ears dearer than any earthly sound. I even fancied, in moments, half dream,—half waking,—that a beloved face was bending over me and watching my slumbers. I could almost wish my days of peril to return, to restore such exquisite illusions."

The general, meanwhile, had not been inactive. At the earliest moment of Lord Lovell's convalescence, he hastened to reply in person to the royal missive which had at last reached his hands, and to entreat in his nephew's name that the king would graciously please to withdraw his displeasure from the Duke of Buckingham. The court was now settled for the winter at Whitehall. During Lord Lovell's danger, the duke had remained in concealment, and was still under sentence of proscription; but by taking upon himself the whole blame of the duel, Lovell gave a welcome plea for the ready clemency of the king.

"You have craved my indulgence for Buckingham, in my friend Arthur's name," observed Charles, after

gracefully according the petition; "why not in your own? Reflect how much I am your debtor, beyond the paltry sums whereof Clarendon hath already secured you payment; and gratify me, my dear general, by some personal request."

"*My* days are done,—I have nothing to hope or to desire!" replied the blunt old man.

"*Nothing?* I wish you heartily joy!" retorted Charles with a smile. "Oddsfish, if that 's the case, you 're happier than the king!"

"Your Majesty remembers me of old, a murmuring and discontented man," observed Sir Richard. "But the event which I wasted my days and nights in fretting for is, by the mercy of Providence, achieved. The throne and the altar are re-established in the land of my forefathers."

"Have at least the grace to say that my Majesty is restored to the throne of *his!*" cried the king with a smile, perceiving that nobody was within hearing. "So may the cordiality of your congratulations make up for their tardiness."

But Sir Richard made no reply.

"If his memory can compass so wide a span as a quarter of a century," resumed the king, "let Sir Richard Lovell recall the period when his daily lesson to a wilful boy, committed by the tenderest of fathers to his charge, was—'Forgive your enemies, that your enemies may become friends! Pardon the trespasses of others, that your own may be pardoned.' That boy

hath grown into a man, among whose countless faults vindictiveness was never yet detected. Hath the governor contracted that unchristianly failing from which his lessons so happily secured his pupil? No, no; your hand, sir! Let us be friends; and be the first proof of your good-will an appeal to mine. Our prerogatives of the crown are somewhat abridged, my dear general, since you first impressed upon your pupil the value of the word. Nevertheless, some virtue yet resides in it. Tell me—how can I serve you?"

The tone and look with which these affectionate words were spoken, thawed the long-congealed loyalty of Sir Richard Lovell. He was unable to withhold his hand from the outstretched hand of the king.

"By assisting in bringing together, in happy wedlock, those whom God hath joined, and evil thoughts divided," was his reply. "I should die content, sire, could I behold my nephew and niece dwelling together in peaceful union at Lovell House."

"Tut, man! 't is surely no such hard matter to bring a fine young man into grace with a fine young woman, and *vice versâ!*" cried the king. "'T will need no stretch of tyranny to make matters even betwixt them. Leave Arthur Lovell to my guidance, and the queen will desire no better task than to try *her* eloquence upon the perverse lady, who, of all our English dames, hath won furthest into the heart of her Majesty. If we can only so far amend your

motion as to fix the happy couple one part of the year in our household at Whitehall, I shall be as pleased as yourself with my office."

As soon, therefore, as Lord Lovell was able to sit up, the good-humoured monarch sauntered as a familiar friend to his chamber, and bestowed, with due liberality, on the sick man all that was harboured in his memory of such sermons and orations in praise of matrimony as, for the last twelve months, had been dinned in his royal ears. But the effort was unavailing. Both master and scholar soon grew weary of the theme.

"By St. Ursula and her eleven thousand! 't will never do," cried Charles, expanding into a hearty laugh. "I can never put the right serious face upon the matter. I see you look askance at me, Arthur, my lad; just as *I* used to glance at poor Clarendon, when meditating an escape from one of his matrimonific homilies. One word must serve for all. Next week you are to come abroad and look about you. Your first visit is due to *me*, in gratitude for my clemency towards the disobedience which had all but deprived me of one old friend, and made me send to Newgate another. On Monday, my dear Lovell, I shall expect you. The queen hears music in her private apartments. Among her Majesty's guests, remember, will be one whom I would fain have you fairly contemplate ere you finally decline all overtures of reconciliation. The presence of a certain fair lady,

whom I understand from his grace of Buckingham you rescued from a mysterious ambuscade some two months ago, need not, I trust, interfere with your consideration of Lady Lovell."

Interdicting all reply, the king took leave of the invalid; and Lord Lovell was provoked beyond measure to find himself pledged to an engagement so unsatisfactory. But, elated to the highest pitch by the idea of accompanying his nephew to a court in which he was beginning to found hopes of prosperity for the nation and of gratification for himself, Sir Richard would hear of no pretext for absenting himself.

"I see through your design. I clearly discern your intention to flurry me into entanglements with Lady Lovell, from which I may not afterwards recede. You will take advantage of an unguarded moment to betray me into advances which I forewarn you, my dear uncle, can be productive of no result," cried the invalid.

"'Fore heaven! the fellow's obstinacy waxes greater than ever," cried the old man. "I had hoped that so much probing and leeching would relieve your veins of their bitter Digby blood. Trust me, Arthur, I have better sport in hand than to trouble myself with your likings or dislikings, your freezings or thawings. The king hath invited all the old Wor'ster men to do honour to my reappearance at court; and, betwixt ourselves, a royal

order is already issued to old Cibber, the marble carver, for a monument of honour to the memory of one most dear to us, of which the old abbey yonder will have news to tell for centuries to come. Rowley hath wiped off scores with the house of Lovell. Let us not be churlish in refusing to acknowledge his just payment of the family debt."

It was with a heavy heart, however, that Lovell suffered Mateo to arrange the points of the rich suit of garnet-coloured velvet, with facings of sable fur, provided by the general to cherish his invalid condition; and the paleness of his face and sharpness of his handsome features became doubly apparent when arrayed in the flowing richness of courtly gear. Leaning on the arm of Sir Richard, he traversed the state apartments.

Already a brilliant crowd was assembled; and as the doors of the music-room were thrown open, the Duke and Duchess of York, with their suite, made their appearance. Brilliantly illuminated, the gallery seemed doubly resplendent with the sparkling of female beauty. Ranged around the queen sat the Ladies Chesterfield, Radnor, Shrewsbury, Montagu, Bedford, Falmouth, Southesk, Feversham, Lyttleton; while in the recess of the window, behind the throne, stood five out of the six lovely maids of honour, whose freaks were supposed to tax just then to the utmost the patience of Mademoiselle de la Garde, the far-famed "mother of the maids." Those beauteous

faces, which the pencil of Lely has immortalized, with their sleepy eyes, velvet skins, and pouting lips, were there in all their winning plenitude of youth and loveliness.

But amid the blooming groups assembled, like knots of clustering flowers, the agitated Lovell looked in vain for the demure countenance and downcast eyes of his wife. It was not at Whitehall that he could be guided to recognition of her person, as in the Mall, from her leaning upon the arm of his old aversion, Mistress Corbet; and he had unluckily exacted a promise from his uncle that no step should be taken to point them out to each other.

The concert commenced. One of the fine symphonies recently composed by Matthew Locke, to be introduced into the play of Macbeth, filled the groined ceiling with its fine imaginative harmonies; and during the performance the eyes of Lord Lovell, who was reclining pale and anxious against one of the columns of the gallery, wandered from point to point in search of one whom they longed, yet dreaded, to behold. The general, out of patience with his abstraction, had made off to the opposite extremity of the gallery in company with old Russell, of the Foot Guards, of minuet celebrity, and was watching from afar the movements of more than one member of the gay assemblage. At last he detected a faint start, and, in a moment, a hectic flush overspread the pale face of Lord Lovell.

Beside the venerable Countess of Carlisle, who had been induced by the personal request of the queen to forego for once her beloved retirement, sat the beautiful friend of the Duke of Buckingham; her snowy draperies looped with orient pearl, a circlet of brilliants confining the rich tresses of her raven hair. At the close of a military symphony, which appeared the signal for a general movement, Lord Lovell ventured to approach her; and the heart of the attentive veteran beat quicker than it had done for twenty years before, as he watched the event of the interview.

Again Lord Lovell started when, after a low obeisance, his compliments of ceremony elicited a brief reply from the lovely lady. It was the voice of his gentle nurse. The mild eyes fixed upon him were hers,—the sweet breath uttering his name was her own. A pang of mingled wonder and delight, too acute to bear, rushed through his fainting heart; and Sir Richard reached the spot scarcely in time to assist in bearing him from the gallery. With the aid of Lord Arran, Lovell was quickly conveyed into a small withdrawing-room adjoining the private entrance of the queen.

"I was to blame not to foresee this," cried Charles, who, on the rumour of the sudden illness of Lord Lovell, had followed the party. "Stand aside, my dear general; 't is neither your face nor mine he must gain sight of when he comes to himself. Nay,

madam, draw not away. Remember, your word is pledged to Charles Stuart that my friend's probation is at an end. Look up, Arthur, revive to happiness and love! I ask you again, as you were asked aforetime at the altar, 'Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?' *Your* indulgence, fair lady, is still to be entreated. Let the silence of his deep emotion plead for him. No bending of knees, Arthur; you are still under my word of command; but lo! from this hour, your king and governor delegates his authority over you to the noblest of women and of wives. Cherish her as she deserves. Her forbearance hath been tried enough to last out the remnant of both your lives."

* * * * *

I do not write for that dull maid,
To whom it must in terms be said

that the happiness of this second union effaced all memory of the misfortunes attending the first. Lovell House became renowned in the history of the times for its princely hospitalities and domestic peace; and though upon old Elias Wright's entreaty that his old age might be comforted by the return of his nephew and niece to Dalesdene, now that the presence of the auditor was no longer of daily import, yet to the last day of his life the general remained a happy inmate at Dickon's Fort, where it was part of the sergeant's duty to train old Stark and Sturm into good manners,

so as not to interfere with the visits of little Arthur Lovell to his grand-uncle.

Once a year the families of Corbet, Shum, and Wright made it a point of conscience, in compliance with the earnest invitations of their benefactress, to unite under her roof, when, if an accidental pleasantry served for a moment to recall the misunderstandings of less happy days, a guilty blush would overspread the countenance of Lovell, till cheered by the affectionate smiles of his wife.

To the invitations of his Majesty that the last of the Lovells should accept some permanent office in the royal household, the prudent husband showed himself less subservient; the lingering effects of his wound enabling him to plead ill health as a pretext for respectful refusal.

We read of the Lovells as occasional sharers in the princely hospitalities of Whitehall; but it is not till the reign of Anne, and in the person of their eldest son, that we find the name inscribed in the annals of public life.

Some trifling mementoes of this singular family history are still in existence. The terrace, the canal, the old quince tree, retain their primitive simplicity; the portrait by Vandyke, almost its original strength of colouring. Within sight of these memorials, and aided by a diligent perusal of family records, we have communicated, under fictitious names, the true history of a COURTIER OF CHARLES II.

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